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Sight and Sound

CRANADA 8



The new 'Prime Suspect': 4

BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS



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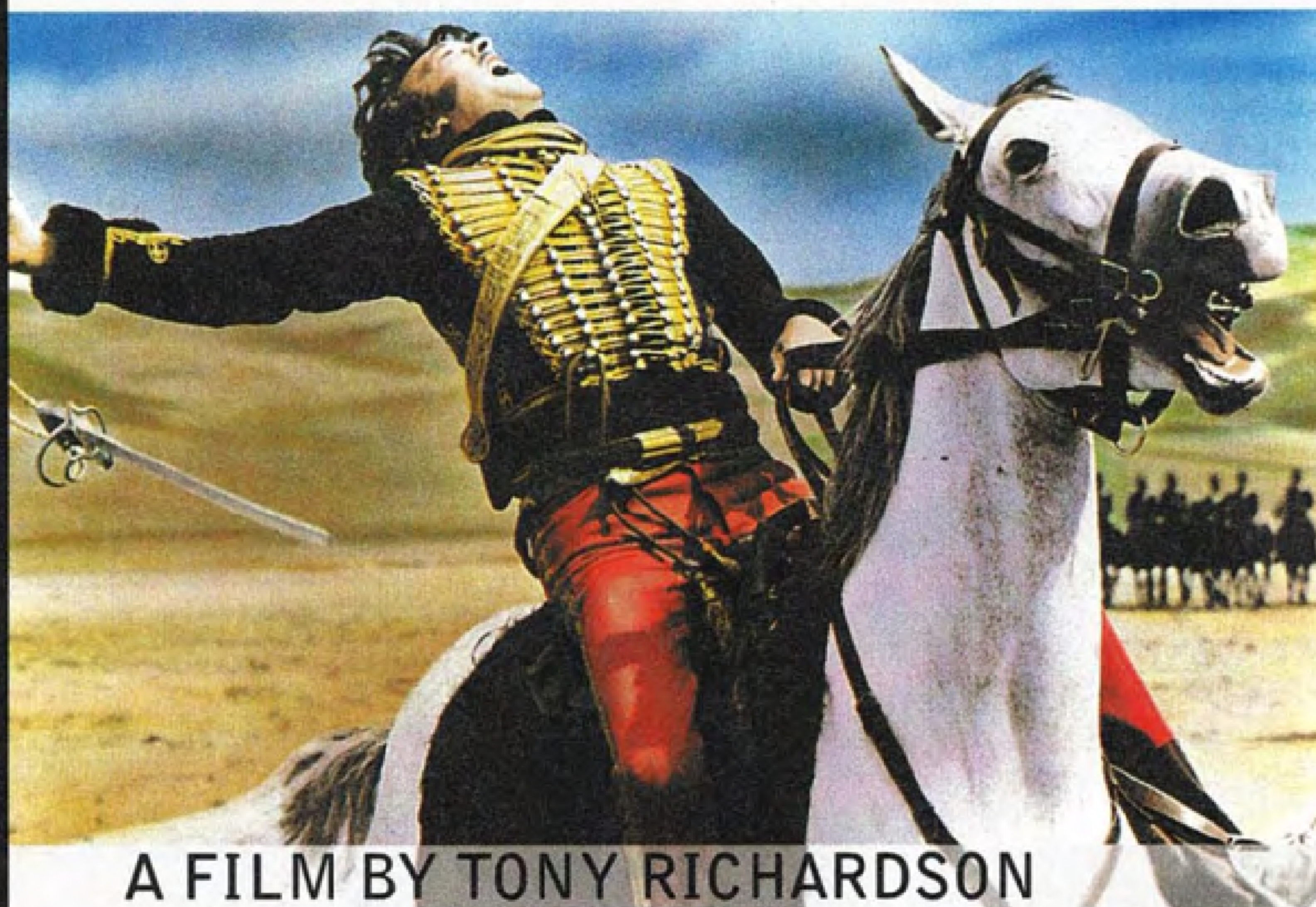
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BBC heritage

Contributors to this issue

David Curtis is Film and Video Officer at the Arts Council

Jenny Diski, whose most recent novel is *Happily Ever After*, is writing a drama for BBC television

Richard Dyer's new collection of essays, *Only Entertainment*, will be reviewed in a future issue

Anthony Easthope has published numerous books on literary theory

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Nicky Hamlyn is a film editor

Geoffrey Macnab's book on Rank will be published early next year

Claire Monk is a freelance film critic

Kim Newman, critic and novelist, has recently published *Anno Dracula*

David Parkinson is editing a collection of Graham Greene's writing on cinema

Berenice Reynaud writes for *Liberation* and *Cahiers du cinéma*

Henry Sheehan is an LA-based film critic

Iain Sinclair's most recent novel is *Downriver*

David Thompson is a BBC producer and co-editor of *Scorsese on Scorsese*

Linda Ruth Williams is the author of a book on D. H. Lawrence and cinema

Ben Woolley's book on Virtual Reality was published recently by Blackwell

Peace seems to have broken out between the government and the BBC, if the Green Paper and subsequent press coverage are any measure. The dismantle-the-pinko-broadcasters rhetoric of Margaret Thatcher's regime is hardly visible in the document published recently. It has been drafted by John Birt, the Green Paper says, "In many ways, the BBC has both embodied and communicated our national heritage". To anyone who has followed the history of the BBC and watched it shape notions of national identity and nationhood over the past fifty years, it would be hard to dissent from the truth of these words, even if easy to dissent from their spirit.

Yet while this *entente cordiale* is welcome, one of the reasons for the declaration of peace is the corporation's willingness to take on so much of the Tory government's language. 'Heritage', 'producer choice', 'accountability', 'value for money', 'efficiency' – these are among the keywords of the BBC's response to the Green Paper, words that have been learnt by reading the lips of the administrations of the last thirteen years. Whether 'producer choice' et al make good business sense is another matter; and the recent BBC accounting debacle is hardly a reassuring sign of its business judgment.

But leaving that aside, it may not necessarily be a bad thing for the BBC to speak the language of the ruling order at times, if by so doing it can continue to do what it wants. The problems Jeremy Isaacs seems to have had at Covent Garden lie in part in his unwillingness to speak enthusiastically about performance indicators; Michael Grade's success at Channel 4 (and there are many that would call it his failure) has been his eagerness to talk the language of the market in order to ensure the channel's survival.

Of course it may be that the BBC has adopted the prevailing vocabulary because its *editorial* view and that of the Tories are now at one. And certainly the corporation's response to the Green Paper, *Extending Choice: The BBC's Role in the New Broadcasting Age* suggests that the BBC has not been immune to the government's point of view. In this

document, the language of the marketplace sits contentedly next to the language of the nation and national heritage – as it has done in all post-1979 Tory election manifestos. The government and the BBC share a commitment to economic imperatives at work and to cultural authority at home.

Obviously it is right and proper that the BBC should have great regard and responsibility for the 'national heritage'. But there are two ways of understanding that heritage. One is to say that we know what it is and why we value it – and expect the BBC to transmit it. The second is to say that we are far from agreeing what the national heritage is, or even how heritage ought to be described and valued – and that we require the BBC to be a major place in which the debates over such matters take place. Tragically, the document sides with the first of these positions (while including the now traditional genuflection to 'regions' and 'ethnic minorities').

There is not a whiff in 'Expressing British Culture and Entertainment', the section of the document devoted to the arts, that debate ought to be a central concern of arts broadcasting. Transmission of an already agreed national heritage is almost all. Yet when examples of the heritage are quoted, they often invite dissent (why Trollope and not Charlotte Brontë?) and noticeably refer to no one – with the sole exception of John Osborne – later than the early twentieth century.

If the last twenty years, and above all the 'Rushdie affair', have taught us anything, it is that culture and heritage are not things on which 'we' are all agreed. If the BBC under its new Director General doesn't recognise this and initiate and sustain real argument over values, cultural as well as political and social, then the corporation will not be worth defending.

TOP TEN 1992 Jill McGreal was acting associate editor during the months when the poll was being prepared. The poll simply would not have been done without her. We owe her enormous thanks, yet unforgivably forgot to record her name at the head of those who helped us.

JERRY ON LINE #1

James Sillavan – Peter Lydon ©



'Jerry, it's a feel-good escapist kid's movie with a short shelf-life, so it's gotta go wide by Christmas. Sit on the director, work round the clock, make compromises, bribe cinema owners, employ more writers, throw money at the actors – if that doesn't work we'll move Christmas...'

Skeletons and corpses

Jenny Diski

Crime and Punishment started it all: that dance between the arrogant but guilt-ridden criminal, and the downbeat, sagacious policeman who knows his task is to relieve the conscience of the evil-doer. A kind of love story which understands the powerful need the killer and the copper have for each other. Of course, we have trouble now with the criminal side of the equation. We're not sure we believe in existential guilt, so we're prepared to settle for dysfunction. The criminal is pathologised, and forensic evidence takes the place of the seductive power of confession. The policeman, too, suffers a change. He is no longer world-weary and wise – we can hardly believe that – but his own private struggles offer an alternative humanity to keep us on his side. Her own private struggles, in the case of *Prime Suspect*, where gender itself provides the humanising aspect.

In *Prime Suspect 2*, the signposts are hoisted from the first shots of Helen Mirren, as good as ever as Tennison, interviewing a blank-faced, vicious rapist, who you can't help noticing is black. You also notice he's black when it emerges he's really another detective acting the part for a police training course on rape, and then, just to confirm the detail, he's definitely black when he turns up in Tennison's bed. When she has to leave him, closing the door of the hotel room on his complaint of being used, to investigate a buried body found in a racially sensitive street, you get the idea that racism might be the subject of the upcoming hours of viewing.

DI Oswalde, played with a constrained intensity by Colin Salmon, turns up again as the token Afro-Caribbean on the murder squad, to remind Tennison and us that blacks and women are similarly handicapped by their compulsive need to prove themselves to a prejudiced and self-satisfied world. I don't have any argument with the point being made, but the thought processes are too loud, the characters placed too pointedly in the plot for the best drama to develop. It's as if a painter forgot to rub out the perspective lines after finishing a landscape. The skeleton of the long-buried corpse in the film is not the only one which becomes visible.

Dark passion

But what about the story? *Prime Suspect 1* kept its audience imprisoned in uncertainty about the guilt of the main suspect, and anxious about Tennison's judgment. We were allowed to witness the ties of affection between the suspect and his family, and to be touched by their bewilderment and pain. Moreover, there was a one-to-one mental struggle between the suspect and Tennison which gave the series the quality of an heroic drama. The two archetypal enemies pitted against each other, but with mutual respect, was an effective and intriguing counterpoint to the contempt Tennison was receiving from her own side. One of the problems of the second series is that Tennison's battle to gain respect from



Sifting through the debris: Helen Mirren as Tennison in 'Prime Suspect 2'

the men she is working with is already won before the film opens, and the residual prejudice from the men running the show is a matter of promotion, not survival.

Much of the dramatic tautness is dispersed in *Prime Suspect 2* by a loss of emotional focus on and between the characters in favour of making broad sociological points. The great mystery of guilt or innocence, and the single-minded battle between the pursuer and the pursued, are lost in the busy-ness. The relationship between Oswalde and Tennison remains schematic (white woman, black man; female boss, male subordinate). With no discernible desire between them, no hunger of either body or mind, they can't be more than ciphers. The community policing issue also has the quality of formula, with angry meetings of black residents shaking their fists at white policemen, and opportunist politicians who manipulate all the parties. You've seen it done before, and better realised. The script, by Allan Cubbitt, falls too often into the waiting cliché traps dug by Lynda La Plante's plot.

The loss of a single, enigmatic quarry is the most critical lack in the second series. There are several suspects who emerge early on, and it's clear far too soon that like *Murder on the Orient Express*, we are looking at group guilt. Tony, the young black neighbour, is too alarmed, almost catatonic with fear, not to be somewhere in the frame,

along with his over-protective and defensive sister. The other suspect, Harvey, a sick and sullen racist, is too unsympathetic to move us, and firmly linked by time and circumstance to the murder, so his drama can only be focused on whether he will die before Tennison can get a confession out of him. Since there's hardly any doubt that all are somehow involved, the only mystery is 'how much?'. And 'how much?' is not a question designed to keep you on the edge of your seat.

But the film does catch fire in the middle, when a clever, pacy tension is achieved, reminiscent of the first series, by cutting between Oswalde's harassment and hounding of the vulnerable Tony and Tennison's urgent coaxing of a deathbed confession from Harvey. Tennison and Harvey duet beautifully in a bedside scene that plays knowingly with the dark passion of last rites. The investigator's desire to extract the truth before silence closes over it forever, and the power of the dying man to give or withhold his secrets from those who live on, has a touch of eternal chill. More so, when set against the desperate *pas de deux* of DI Oswalde and the increasingly crazed Tony, in the police interview room, as each moves out of control, towards catastrophe.

On the edge of defeat

Oswalde's need, as a black in a white world, to make his name on the case, results in a fatal loss of humanity which echoes what we see of Tennison's failed (in the first series) and (now) empty private life. Again, it is implied, their identification as minorities in the system is the cause. There's no time to get life right when their burden of having to prove themselves is so great.

Interestingly, if not very plausibly, it's the overt racist in the team, arresting blacks as soon as look at them, who turns up trumps as a human being and a copper. He is the one who, disturbed by the boy's distress, tries to protect Tony from Oswalde's interrogation, and then shields Oswalde during the inquest on the boy's subsequent death. His basic humanity and commitment to the job are seen to override his prejudices, but he is, after all, that confident combination neither Oswalde nor Tennison can be: white and male. He has time to stop and think, whereas the other two can only react to circumstances designed to undermine them.

Tennison is forever on the defensive, forever on the edge of defeat by the powers that be. The point is underlined, after the successful conclusion of the case, as Tennison is once again overlooked for the promotion that should be her due, partly because of the indiscretion of her liaison with Oswalde. Yet it's curiously lacking in power, as if it was an afterthought. Equally, the uncovering of the killer seems peripheral, as if it was tacked on because there has to be a chase. Where *Prime Suspect 1* managed to funnel several issues through the narrow neck of an obsessive plot, its offspring has turned the funnel on its head so that everything is tipped untidily over too broad an area to allow the heart to keep racing.

'The investigator's desire to extract the truth and the power of the dying man to give or withhold his secrets has a touch of eternal chill'

Ever-ending story

Michael Eaton

All over the planet right now, quick-save Messiahs are predicting the day and hour when the world will end, while all around the same orb writers are staring at blank sheets and pulsing screens desperately concerned that the story they are working on doesn't have an end. Endings should be the easiest part of the tale: they lived happily ever after, he dies, they marry, they marry and then she dies... a death or a wedding – the two most traditional points of closure. Ah, but getting there can be very painful.

Such eschatological speculations are prompted not because I've just had to hide under the table as a peripatetic evangelist attempted to doorstep me (strange how those who are so confident that their life will never end are so keen to prescribe immanent finale for the rest of us), nor even because I'm having terrible trouble finishing my own tale right now, but because of an anecdote I encountered in Peter Viertel's recent and soporifically entertaining volume of memoirs, *Dangerous Friends*. Viertel's first collaboration with John Huston (whom he later immortalised in his *roman à clef*, *White Hunter, Black Heart*) was on a film provisionally entitled *China Valdez*. This was the tale of a group of brave Cuban terrorists who planned to assassinate their evil dictator by planting a bomb in a cemetery timed to explode when the dictator attended a state funeral. However, the true-life ending was judged less than satisfactory as far as conventional box-office wisdom is concerned, in that the freedom fighters were caught and executed.

But the stars, John Garfield and Jennifer Jones, had been secured, the first day of photography fixed and Huston and Viertel sat down to figure out a satisfactory ending – a process which seems to have consisted largely of the director placing his bets in the morning, listening to the racing results in the afternoon and getting drunk in the evening. William Wyler tells them the script will never work: “there were hundreds of stories that had a great beginning, but very few with an equally good ending”; this is a lighthouse story where “your characters are trapped in the same locale and to get them out of it is a bitch”. So they make the obvious move: they go to Havana, hoping that immersion in a sense of place will solve their problem. It cannot – endings have nothing to do with geography. What is more, Hemingway tells them the political leader their heroes were trying to kill was not a dictator, but a liberal good guy.

Saved from the firing squad

Sam Spiegel, the producer, tries to get a distribution deal with Louis B. Mayer who, of course, wants to know how the picture ends. Spiegel brazenly extemporises that “an American destroyer would come sailing into Havana harbour, dispose of the dictator and save the lives of our heroes”. But the shoot starts with the script still without conclusion and with Spiegel going crazy.

This story does have an ending. Behind Huston and Viertel's respective backs,

Spiegel hired Ben Hecht at \$1,000 a day (in 1947), who saved the day, though flying in the face of historical veracity, by having a revolution break out, thus saving Garfield and Jones from the firing squad. The lingering irony emerged several years later, for though few members of the public paid good money to see *We Were Strangers*, the ‘revolutionary’ conclusion came to haunt the author when he was called in front of a Marine Corps board accused of writing Communist propaganda.

It seems inconceivable today that a movie would start shooting without an ending. What happens now, of course, is that the ending is reshot according to the reactions of a carefully unselected group of teenagers at a preview in San Bernardino. This has led to a cute marketing phenomenon whereby a couple of years after the first outing of the picture (or weeks, in the case of *Dances with Wolves*), it is rereleased with its original, invariably more sombre or ambiguous ending to skim off the art-house crowd, who line the block to see the ‘director's cut’.

This continuing obsession with the correct closure seems somewhat dated in an entertainment ecology in which the best-selling tales seem purposefully designed so that they never end. I have been in *Super Mario Land* for over a year now and still the tubby plumber from Brooklyn has not even had a sniff of Princess Daisy. I wonder what's going to happen in the forthcoming movie with Bob Hoskins as Mario?

I wonder also what Vladimir Propp, the Russian formalist analyst of folk tales, would have made of Nintendo games? Propp synthesised the operations of the tale down into thirty-one separate narrative ‘functions’. Each tale is a combination of these almost algebraic terms. And each needs a function to kick start the motor of the story (this is either an act of villainy committed or the recognition of a lack) and a function to close the tale (this involves

‘William Wyler tells them the script will never work: “there were hundreds of stories that had a great beginning, but very few with an equally good ending”’

the liquidation of the lack that started the story, and in Propp's corpus of folk tales was invariably expressed as “the hero is married and ascends the throne”).

Keeping it upbeat

Super Mario Land might be expressed in Proppian terms as follows: ‘the hero sets off’, followed by an almost infinitely oscillating chain of ‘the hero is pursued’ and ‘the hero is rescued from pursuit’. Throw in the occasional functions of ‘the hero acquires the use of a magical agent’ and ‘the hero is given a new appearance’ and end, presumably, hopefully, one day in the distant future with ‘the hero rescuing the princess’. ‘The lack is liquidated’. If only writing movies were so straightforward.

There is another legendary instance of a writer sitting in his hotel room the night before the last day of the shoot with no idea how to finish the tale, but this concerns a television serial, perhaps the best ever, *Edge of Darkness*. This was not, as I understand it, because the writer, Troy Kennedy Martin, hadn't been able to think of an ending, but rather because his ending was deemed to be unsatisfactory. The act of closure in Troy's script consisted of his protagonist turning into a tree.

Apparently this transformational function (which, by the by, was an entirely logical outcome to the events of the previous six hours) was considered unfeasible. And yet anyone who has read Ovid's *Metamorphoses* will be only too aware that our hero changing into something was evidently considered by our classical forebears not only a perfectly reasonable way to end a tale, but also an aetiological explanation of much of the natural world.

But, we are continually told, movies are not like literary novels, our audience doesn't pay good money to feel let down. Perhaps the real reason that endings are so genetically necessary to tale-telling is... I'm afraid I've run out of words.



Havana-bound: John Garfield and Jennifer Jones in ‘We Were Strangers’, screenplay by Viertel and Huston, with help from Hecht

BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS

Going, going... gong

Geoffrey Macnab

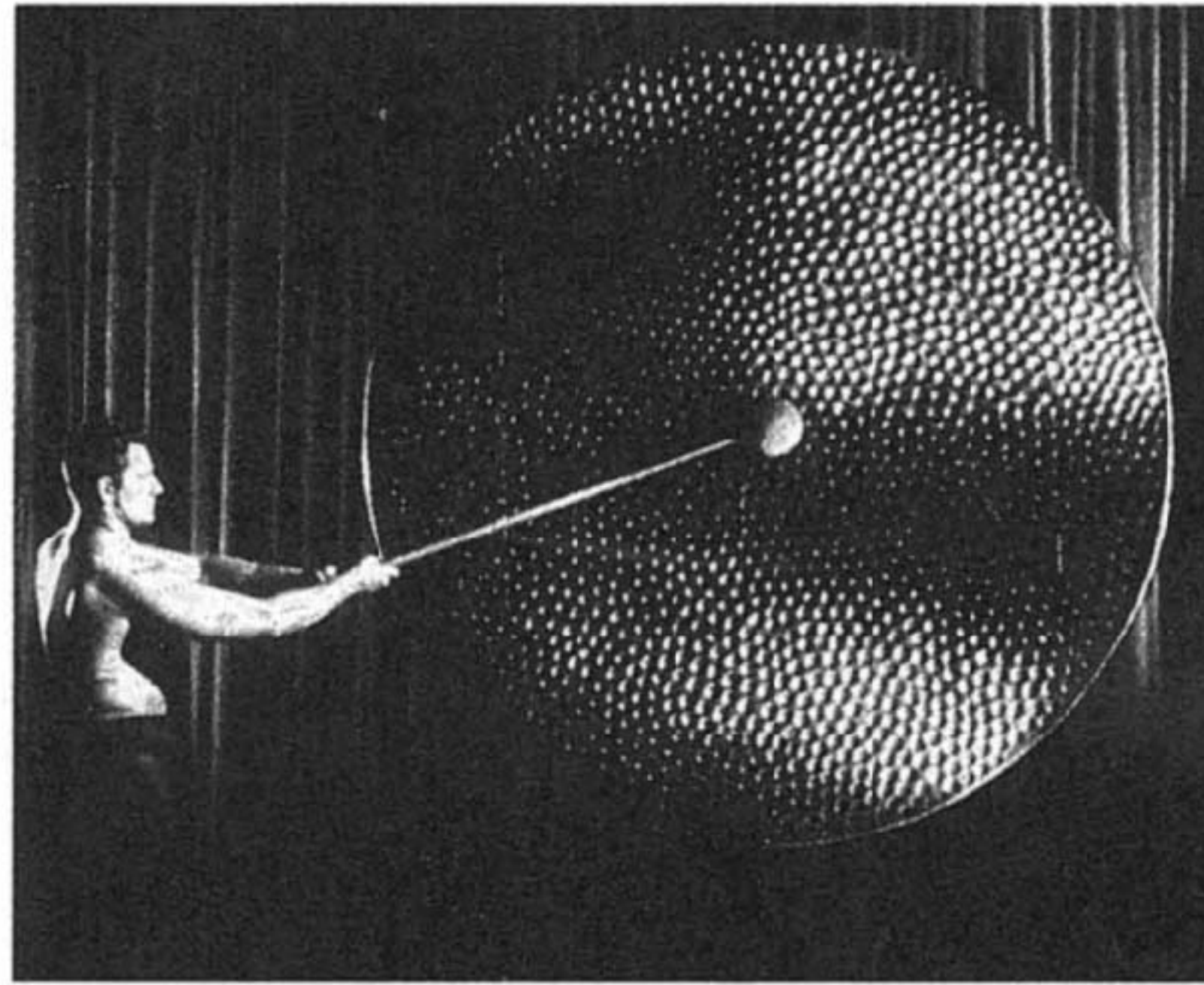
Rumours have been rife throughout the autumn that the Rank Organization, one of Britain's largest leisure conglomerates, is on the verge of selling the family jewels – its film interests. Speculation was fuelled by the supposed sighting of a sale memorandum from Rank, inviting bids for everything from Pinewood Studios to the Rank Film Archive.

It's not hard to see why the Rank Organization should be so eager to off-load some of its assets: gloomy City Cassandras watched in dismay as the group, in a last spasm of 80s expansionism, swallowed up Mecca Leisure two years ago and incurred monumental debts in the process. To try to serve the interest on its borrowing (recently admitted by chief executive Michael Gifford to be in excess of £900 million), the Organization had already put its chain of twenty-two hotels up for sale. It followed that the film and television operations would be next under the gavel – whatever sentimental value they might have, they can't really be said to have contributed more than a flea bite to overall profits since the early 60s, when the then managing director Sir John Davis' canny 1956 investment in photocopying began to bear fruit. By 1969, Rank Xerox was contributing close to 90 per cent of the group's pre-tax profits, a figure which seemed fully to justify a cheeky *Economist* headline: "Copier Company Quits Films".

Rumours of an imminent sale aren't substantiated. Although the press based its reports on the confidences of "senior leisure sources", nobody has owned up in person to having seen the mysterious memorandum. The Rank press office denies its existence with Richard Nixon-like vehemence, and staff at the Rank Film Archive insist that management has reassured them that their jobs are safe.

Sound and fury

But if the rumours were true, it would not only be the staff, but the famous Rank gong that would be out of the cinema business – the mighty symbol associated for so many of us with childhood trips to the Odeon. And yet it can come as something of a disappointment to discover that the Rank golden gong isn't all it's cracked up to be. Unfulfilled expectations are part and parcel of the movie-going experience, and the gong, which rings with a distinctly hollow timbre, signals cinema's subtle betrayal. That almighty wallop is not an almighty wallop at all, for the gong, it turns out, is a fake: a simulacrum made of plaster, wood and paper which would be smashed to smithereens were it to suffer a true thwack. The gongsman's familiar, slow-motion swing of the arms, which seems to presage Herculean effort and adds a suitable note of portentous gravity, is simply a cunning feint, designed to conceal the lack of effort put into the stroke. Even the noise, the massive, juddering reverberation as the hammer appears to make contact with the metal, is a deceit: a mild-mannered percus-



Magical moment: striking the Rank gong

sionist with a Chinese Tam Tam, a very modest instrument, is responsible for that.

Of course, that Rank's golden gong is counterfeit is no great secret. It's all part of cinema's celebrated alchemical ability: to turn a six-inch dwarf into King Kong. With exemplary Brechtian self-reflexivity, cinema loves to bare its devices, to invite us to gawp in amazement at the latest *trompe l'oeil*. And not an anniversary of the Rank Organization goes by without somebody letting us into the very special, very hackneyed secret that the gong is a sham.

Britain cherishes its heavyweight boxers and so it's highly appropriate that Bombardier Billy Wells, the longest-reigning champion in his division before Henry Cooper and a folk hero into the bargain, should be the first Rank gongsman. The gong, after all, quickly became the motif of Britain's national cinema, and Billy was an exemplary role model, doing his bit for charity and taking time off to tell kids that "the best men are always the best behaved". For J. Arthur Rank, who sponsored his exertions on screen, Wells was a talisman of straightforward masculinity. But whatever Rank thought, and however assiduously Billy cultivated his 'nice guy' persona, the symbol of the gong remained ambivalent, managing at once to be reassuringly familiar and outlandishly strange.

Although 30s audiences may have identified Wells, to many the fascination of the gongsman lies in his anonymity. Scrutinising him, and his utterly impassive face, is like scrutinising the *Mona Lisa*. Who is he? Where does he come from? Why isn't he wearing his shirt? As Quentin Falk notes in his sprightly jaunt through Rank history, *The Golden Gong*, Bombardier Billy became something of a sex symbol; when he fought, "middle class ladies, clad in their splendid evening gowns, would be found sitting at ringside".

In a strange way, Billy managed to synthesise two competing strands of British film culture. On the one hand, he was the decent, emotionally repressed soldier, embodying moral fibre, army values, a stiff upper lip and all that. On the other, he hinted at the seamy underside, at sex, violence, vulgarity and the kind of moral turpitude that would have had Uncle Arthur squawking in alarm. Rank, oblivious to his wild exoticism, considered him a fitting figure to preface *The Turn of the Tide*. Made in 1935, and a prize-winner at the Venice Film Festival, this was a rather beautifully shot story of a small fishing community. It had

a strong religious undercurrent, and was the movie which pulled Rank from the fringes of the Religious Film Society into the mainstream of the industry, and indirectly spawned the gong in the first place.

By complete contrast, Billy's heir, Olympic wrestler Ken Richmond, doesn't look out of place gonging Nicolas Roeg's necrophiliac classic, *Bad Timing* (1980), into the cinemas forty years later. This was not a film which appealed to Rank executives. ("A sick film made by sick people for sick audiences" was the verdict of one of them, which was mildly ironic given that Rank had sponsored the project in the first place.) The image of a man walloping a gong is certainly phallogocentric, and is a very odd signet for a film tycoon like Rank, a Methodist who first became interested in cinema when he started buying projectors for a Reigate Sunday School, and whose early avowed intent was to create a "cinema for Christ". In the light of Rank's background, the gong seems almost profane.

A symbol for Britain

It is probably not stretching it too far to suggest that the gong has sounded the aspirations of the British people. In the 40s, when Rank was doing his patriotic bit for British cinema, it stood as a slightly patronising symbol of public service. Rank's dogged determination to tame the symbol, to strain the 'otherness' out of it, is testified to by a 1947 piece in *Picturegoer* magazine: "slowly the caption came into view – J. Arthur Rank Presents – and from behind me came a muffled yawn and a peculiar remark, 'oh dear, now we are going to be educated'. The unseen commentator behind me seemed to have the impression that Mr Rank's name on a picture meant that it was a dose of factual information slightly sugared".

In the 50s, as the British shook off their austerity blues and discovered leisure, the gong leapt off the screen, pursuing potential customers into ballrooms, bingo halls and hotels, and even appearing on a record label. The gongsman, archetype of British masculinity, was now the mascot of elderly women waiting for their numbers to be called. And he began to reproduce at an alarming rate, moonlighting as the motif for Rank Xerox as well as Rank production and distribution. He did preserve some shreds of his former dignity: with television sucking away the audience, he flaunted himself as a size king, inviting spectators to forfeit home and hearth and small screen and come to the cinema to sample the delights of Vistavision and Cinemascope.

These days, he's on a hiding to nothing. Over the years, as the Rank Organization has gradually wound down its commitment to British production, the gong has been struck so many times and for so many causes – everything from Butlins to the Hard Rock Café – that it risks losing its cinematic resonance altogether. It probably wouldn't make an iota of difference to our ailing national cinema if the group lends credence to the rumours enveloping it, and sells off its film interests hook, line, sinker and gong. Alas.

'Of course, that Rank's golden gong is counterfeit is no great secret. It's all part of cinema's celebrated alchemical ability: to turn a six-inch dwarf into King Kong'

Tales of modernity

Berenice Reynaud

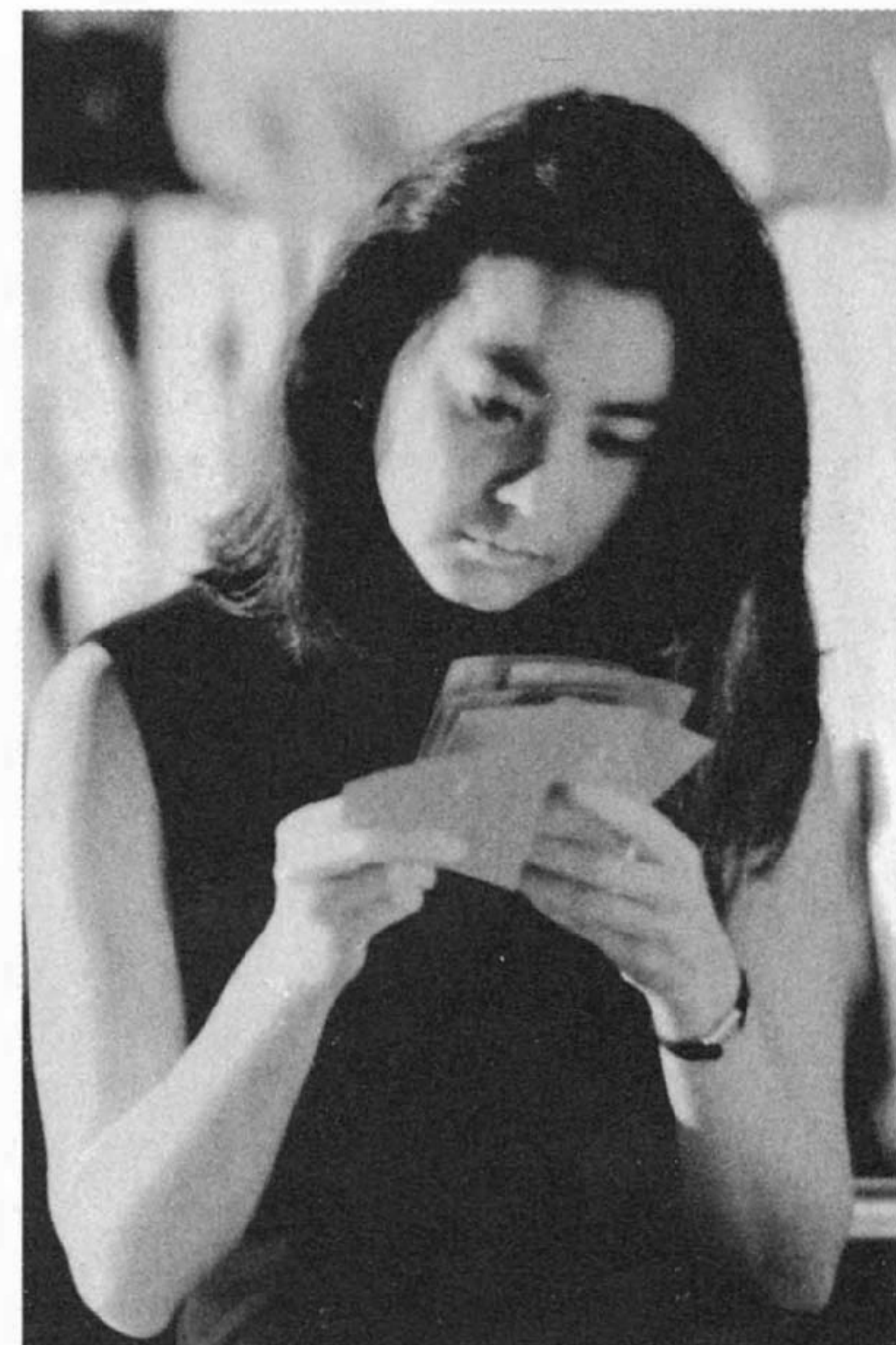
A compelling combination of spectacular landscapes, dusty Old West, and the diaphanous Pacific Ocean skyline, Vancouver is in the process of redefining its identity as a booming film and television production centre and the North American focus for immigration from Hong Kong. It is therefore hardly surprising that the strongest and most popular sections of the International Film Festival, now in its eleventh year, are devoted to Canadian and US independents and East Asian cinemas. In programming the last section, Tony Rayns deliberately emphasised works by young, experimental and/or independent filmmakers. A retrospective of Filipino auteur Raymond Red, including his earlier super-8 shorts (*Enemy*, *The Yawn*, *State of Being*, *As If*, *Studies for "the Skies"*, *Pepe*) and his first ZDF-produced feature, *Heroes* (1992), plunged the viewer into a fascinating world of mosaic-like details, surrealistic fantasies and poetic re-enactments of national myths.

The Goethe Institute now finances film workshops in the Philippines, South Korea and Thailand. The resulting short films (in particular Kim Yun-Tae's *Wet Dream* and, from Thailand, *Under Taboo*, *Land of Laugh* and *City Dog*) are the expression of young artists' search for a cinematic language to represent their modernity, exploring both avant-garde concerns and the economic and

political situation in their countries. In Thailand, genre cinema is alive and well, as demonstrated by Manop Udomdej's *The Dumb Die Fast, the Smart Die Slow*, a thrilling, slightly camp remake of *The Postman Always Rings Twice* set against the despair of unemployed young men. Japan's first gay melodrama, Takehiro Nakajima's *Okoge*, presents a sympathetic, finely drawn picture of Tokyo's gay milieu. Hiroyuki Oki's minimalist diary films and experimental shorts (*Swimming Prohibited*, *Colour Eyes*, *The Protagonist* and *Melody for Buddy Matsumae*), documenting the daily life of a young gay man, belong to a genre of their own, a uniquely Japanese combination of eroticism, alienation and aesthetic ecstasy. Another young Japanese experimental film-maker, Takashi Koike, casts himself as the shy protagonist of his science-fiction tale, *I Find Myself Smaller and Smaller*, in which he is confronted with 'earth patrols' conjured up by an ex-schoolmate who wants to conquer the universe – and with the difficulties of heterosexual desire and male bonding.

No less unusual in their themes, if more traditional in their narrative structures, are Takeshi Kitano's *A Scene at the Sea* and Shunichi Nagasaki's *The Drive*. Kitano, a famous film and television actor, made his directing debut with two violent *yakuza* (gangster) films in which he explored the genre's homoerotic undertones, employing Breton-style framing and editing. In *A Scene at*

'A combination of spectacular landscapes, dusty Old West, and the diaphanous Pacific Ocean skyline, Vancouver is the North American focus for immigration from Hong Kong'

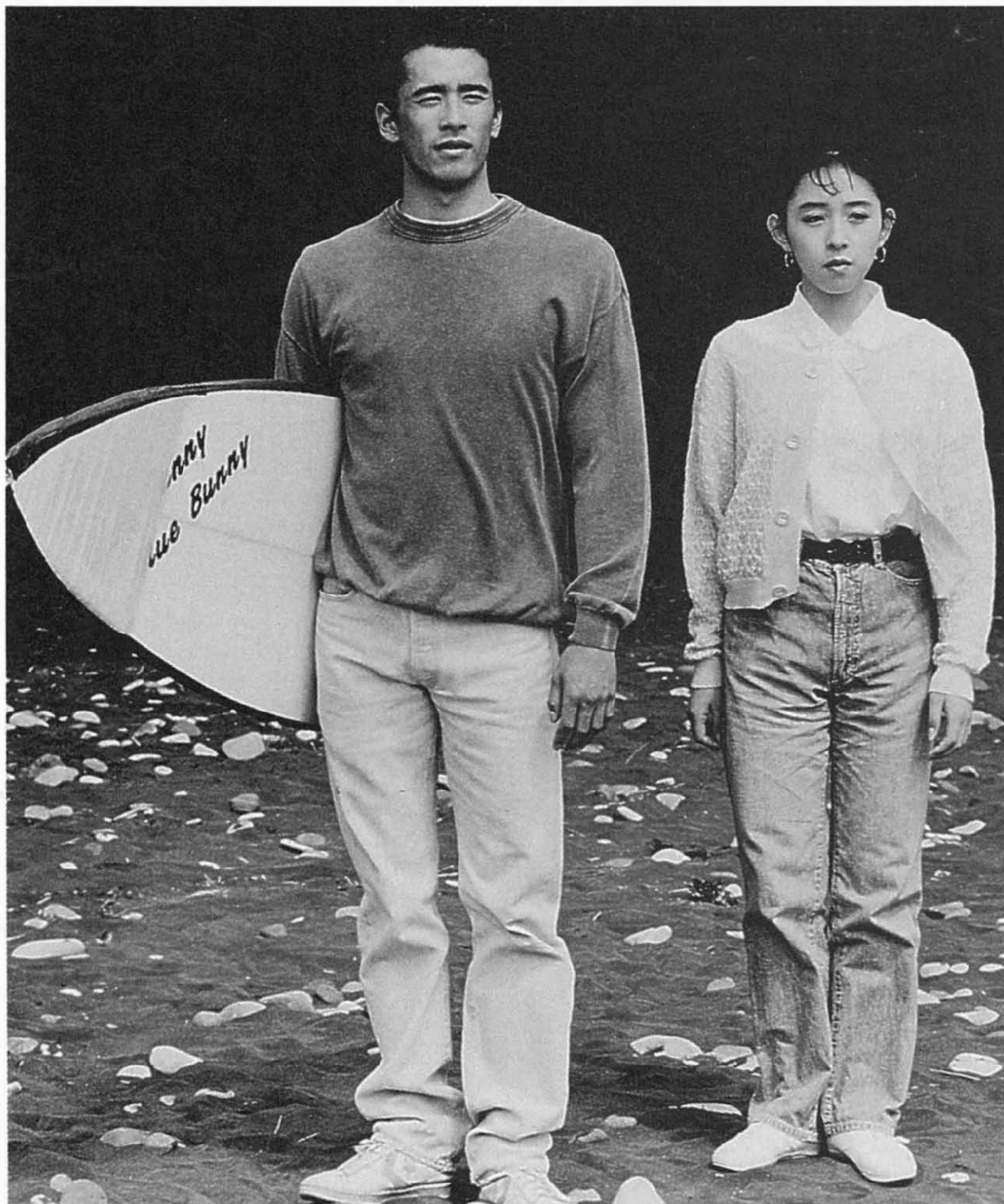


'Peach Blossom Land': a post-New-Wave film

the Sea, which depicts the stubborn efforts of a young deaf-mute garbageman to become a surfing champion, the violence is muted, residing mostly in the resistance of people and elements to the protagonist's single-minded ambition. Nagasaki is well known to festival audiences for his psychothrillers. In *The Drive*, his heroine, a feisty but vulnerable divorced mother, resorts to senseless crime in a desperate attempt to hang on to her married lover.

Taiwan was represented by an Edward Yang retrospective. Yang's four feature films (*That Day*, *On the Beach*, 1983; *Taipei Story*, 1985; *The Terroriser*, 1986; *A Brighter Summer Day*, 1991) have all scrutinised his country's tormented soul with an engaging mixture of modernism and melancholia, contributing to changing the face of Taiwanese cinema. Even if, as in his latest film, women are sometimes victims, they are strong characters, enacting rather than merely embodying the complexities and contradictions of a changing society. The retrospective also included Yang's work for television, *Floating Leaf* (1981), a delicate portrait of the loss of a small-town girl's illusions when she arrives in Taipei; *Wishes*, his contribution to the landmark omnibus film *In Our Times* (1982); and the modernist rendering of *Likely Consequence* (1992), a tongue-in-cheek fable about a middle-class marriage gone wrong.

But post-New-Wave film-makers are now making their debut. Re-edited after its first Cannes showing, Hsu Hsiao-Ming's *Dust of Angels* is a lyrical story of young men's involvement in gang wars and petty crime. *Peach Blossom Land*, directed by Stan Lai, the leader of Taipei's Performance Workshop, plays sensuously with the cinematic rendering of live performance, while weaving together a farcical rendering of a classical poetic fantasy and a melodrama about young lovers, separated in 1948 Shanghai, who meet, old and disillusioned, in modern-day Taipei. These new directions in Asian cinema hold the promise of exciting programmes to come in Vancouver.



'A Scene at the Sea': a garbageman with dreams of the surf

Coppola's film is only the most recent evidence that Bram Stoker's tale haunts us. Is it a myth of sexual desire? A fin-de-siècle allegory? A parable about corruption spreading from the east? Four writers were invited to explore 'Dracula'. Below, Richard Dyer on Coppola's film and vampirism

● The cinema was packed. Tom and I took the first two seats together we could find and I didn't take notice of whom I was sitting next to. We were in any case too engrossed in unguarded conversation to be bothered. It was freezing outside, but hot in the cinema, so we had to take off successive layers of clothing. I was just starting to struggle out of a pullover when the person sitting next to me gave my knee a sharp knock. I turned in surprise and he hissed, "There's no need to keep rubbing your leg against mine". I was so startled by this sudden eruption of homophobia that I immediately went into politeness overdrive, I was sorry, I really hadn't realised. And throughout the film I kept my body tensed away from him, lest my relaxed knee inadvertently touch his dreary thigh. Perhaps it was only this that made me feel alienated from the new *Dracula*, but I suspect also that Coppola's Stoker's vampires are not my vampires, not by any means queer.

There is no doubt that Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which the new film follows so fully, is the liter-

ary *locus classicus* of the vampire. Huge though the corpus of vampire tales is, the character of Dracula dominates. His is probably the only vampire's name most people know: it sells holiday tours and images of dictatorship in Romania, it is used in the titles of films in which he does not appear (such as *Dracula's Daughter* and *Brides of Dracula*). Dracula is the vampire *par excellence*. Yet, admirable and fascinating as much of Stoker's novel is, I prefer Sheridan LeFanu's 'Carmilla', or Richard Matheson's *I Am Legend*, or above all Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* and its sequels. Similarly in films, I prefer non-Draculas like the aforementioned *Daughter*, *Kiss of the Vampire*, *Daughters of Darkness* or *Near Dark*, or those that only take Stoker's Dracula as a point of departure (Murnau's *Nosferatu*, Bela Lugosi's incarnations, Peter Sasdy's *Taste the Blood of Dracula*). The new *Dracula* is not of these.

Francis Ford Coppola and scriptwriter James V. Hart have, as the credit that opens the film, "Bram Stoker's *Dracula*", suggests, indeed gone

back to Stoker. In terms of inclusion of incidents and characters, there is more left of the novel here than in any previous film versions with the possible exception of the 1970 Spanish *El Conde Dracula* (Jesús Franco). To the now well-trod lines of Jonathan Harker's visit to Transylvania and Dracula's coming to England to wreak havoc on Harker's friends and relatives are added elements that have only occasionally appeared in previous versions (the character of the Texan, Quincy P. Morris; the pursuit of Dracula back to Transylvania finally to ensnare him). The one substantial new element added to this, a prologue explaining how Vlad the Impaler became Dracula, gives a particular inflection to the story, but remains true to the project: it is well known that Vlad was an inspiration to Stoker.

The manner of telling also owes more than usual to Stoker. The use of multiple narrative strands (Jonathan and Mina, Lucy and her beaux, the asylum, Van Helsing) is sustained, as in the novel, until two-thirds of the way through, when it is ironed out into a linear, much less engrossing stalk-and-kill climax. The film also makes a stab at retaining the novel's multiple points of view, with sequences inaugurated by voiceovers, captions and visuals that link the subsequent events to a particular character's perspective. Care is even taken with the novel's emphasis on different ways of telling, both formal modes (diaries, letters, news-stories) and media (handwriting, typing, cylinder recording). To the latter is added reference to the cinematograph, not as a source of the story we are seeing, but as something that Dracula himself has recourse to in his seduction of Mina.

Coppola's *Dracula* flings itself at all this narrative material, emerging like a music video directed by Dario Argento. As in a video, narrativity comes at you in snatches, more a suggestion of connected incidents across a welter

ALL ACTION



DRACULA AND DESIRE



Love and blood: the blasphemous sacrament of Gary Oldman's Dracula. Opposite: men are eaten alive by female vampires

◀ of vivid imagery than a fully presented plot. As in Argento's *Suspiria*, say, or some other post-60s horror movies like Sam Raimi's *The Evil Dead*, narrative, and with it the pleasures of tease and suspense, are unimportant; it's the maelstrom of sensation that matters. This means that the story may be hard to follow if you either haven't read Stoker's *Dracula* or have a less than total recall of it (I remembered who Renfield and Quincy were, but it goes so fast that I had a hard time figuring out how and why at the end Mina gets to Transylvania before her menfolk). With *Suspiria* or *The Evil Dead*, this doesn't matter too much since there's so little plot anyway, and it may not matter with this *Dracula* either. The point, perhaps, was not to do Stoker in full-blooded re-creation, but simply to allude to as much as possible of the book while getting on with the business of creating a particular feeling and exploring the connotations of the Dracula idea.

As to the feeling, Coppola has certainly achieved something distinctive. Always one of cinema's great colourists, he has here come up with a symphony in engulfing red and black. The prologue is shot in near-silhouette, black on red, setting the colour key signature for the film. Early sequences in Victorian England are anaemically coloured, gradually to be swallowed by red and black, vermilion and pitch, blood and the night. I am not the first to have reached for 'engorgement' as a word to describe the film. It's not just the redness of blood swelling the film's climaxes, but the fullness of the image, bursting to the edge of the frame with thick colour and dense visual texture. Most remarkably, it's in the vampires' costuming, most voluminous when they are most needy. They look bloated with lust, and yet move then with greatest speed and ease, gliding not walking, as if motored by the desperate urgency of desire. When Lucy has become a vampire, she is dressed entirely in white, with bridal lace and fold upon fold of silk, and her face too is pale as death; yet her shrouded body rears up turgidly, the lace ruffs round her neck are puffed like a monstrous lizard, even her cheeks seem fuller. Even without the red, she is the embodiment of engorgement.

To this stunning – and wearying – feeling, Coppola adds many of the connotations of vampirism. The vampire motif always has something to do with the idea of a being, or way of being, that literally lives off another. It was born (in the early nineteenth century) of a society increasingly conscious of interdependency, while losing that firm sense of fixed, rightful, social hierarchy that had concealed dependency; in short, it was born of industrial capitalist democracy. The vampire idea deals in the terror of recognising, challenging or being challenged by dependency, and always registers this through the body: the dependencies of its needs and drives, especially, but not exclusively, sexuality. Like all long-lived popular cultural ideas, innumerable variations can be played on this basic concept, its vivid iconography and compelling narrative patterns. Folklorists stress the fear of the living that the dead are not well and truly dead, a fear that may also conceal a hope; Marxists liked to compare capi-

talists to vampires, feeding off the labour of the working class. In *Ganja and Hess* (1971), Bill Gunn used the vampire idea to explore the dependencies of race and colonialism; the British short *The Mask of Lilith* (1986) similarly explored vampirism as a metaphor for gender, sexual and racial oppression and resistance.

The possibilities are endless, and Coppola and Hart know a good few of them. You want the attraction and terror of sexuality, the attraction of the terror of sexuality? Here it is, in Dracula's metamorphosis from glowering bearded prince to cadaverous old goat to *fin-de-siècle* dandy, and in the wolf/ape thing that takes Lucy in the night. You want, more specifically, male fears of female sexuality? Here is the engorged, uncontrollable libidinous preference of Lucy and Mina for Gary Oldman's dandy Dracula over Keanu Reeves' sensitive but proper Jonathan. Or Aids is a possibility, flung in here in a few lines ominously connecting sex, blood and disease. There's even a vegetarian reading, in a cut that has the audience groaning as at a bad pun and which is borrowed from *The Hunger*, where Van Helsing's dismemberment of Lucy's head is followed straight on by him carving with relish into a side of rare beef.

Or how about the vampire as the old world, old Europe, Eastern Europe, leeching off modern, industrialising, Western Europe (and North America)? This has in recent years been seen as one of the novel's most interesting themes, stressed not only in the references to modern means of communication (typewriters, cylinders), but in the characters of the Texan (the new rich of the New World) and Jack Seward, the lunatic-asylum director with new, rational and humane ideas about madness and its treatment. This is all there in Coppola's *Dracula*, given new inflection by a sequence at the cinematograph and by rendering parts of the final stalk-and-kill to look like a Western, the genre that encapsulates the conquering destiny of ethnically European expansion. The film is even aware of a gendered dimension to modernity, not so much, as in the book, through Mina, associated through typing with the New Woman's skill with technology and the possibility of an independent career, but in the way female nudes are interpolated into the endlessly repeated film shown in the sideshow booth where Dracula seduces Mina, a recognition of the simultaneous historical production of woman and cinema as spectacle.

The film seems to know about all the above; such themes are there not just by virtue of the completeness of its use of the novel's incidents and characters. Yet none of them is really developed or compelling. It's post-modern allusionism, a welter of things to make reference to without any of them mattering much. The most interesting and, surprisingly enough, original is a Christian interpretation. Christianity has, of course, always been part of the vampire tale, but often in a rather perfunctory way. Holy water and a cross held up in the vampire's face might put him or her off for a while, but so did a bunch of garlic; real destruction could only come about by a stake through the heart, vaguely Christian perhaps, but pretty

pagan too. The Christian possibilities seemed not to have survived the riposte of the character in Roman Polanski's *Dance of the Vampires* (1967), who waives aside a proffered crucifix with the information that he's Jewish. There are few vampire films (or pieces of writing) since in which Christianity has any force, yet it is the one theme that gets some development in the new film.

The potential for a fuller Christian reading of the vampire idea is obvious. The central sacrament of Christianity is wine drunk as blood (in the Catholic doctrine of transubstantiation, this is at the spiritual level no mere symbol, it is the actual blood of Christ); the most important icon of Christianity is a dead man who has eternal life. Most writers and film-makers have failed to exploit this, either because they depict vampires as the enemy of Christianity, or because they are not interested enough in Christianity to bother. In Coppola's *Dracula*, by contrast, Dracula is strongly associated with Christ.

The opening section depicts Vlad as a Defender of the Faith against the Turks (in other words, against Islam, though the film perhaps prudently plays that down); when he discovers that his beloved Princess Elizabeth has killed herself, thinking him dead, he believes God has deserted him (as, on the cross, did Christ); blood gushes from the crucifix on the altar and Vlad, soaking and drinking it up while railing against God, becomes a vampire, Dracula. When Dracula seduces Mina (a reincarnation of Elizabeth), he makes a cut in his breast for her to suck at; such a cut is familiar iconography in medieval and later Christian art, and the connection is insisted on by cross-cutting with Mina marrying Jonathan and taking communion with him, drinking wine/blood as a sign of transcendent union. When Dracula is finally impaled, his face metamorphoses from hideous white slug to long-haired dandy via a bearded incarnation that is Vlad but also looks like countless images of Christ. In short, though the theme disappears from view from time to time, Dracula here is an anti-Christ, not so much in the sense of being an enemy of Christ as in being an inversion of the Christ idea. Drinking Christ's blood while cursing God damns him to eternal life, dependent forever on human blood, having gorged on and rejected divine blood. He offers his eternal life by the same token as Christ offered his, the drinking of his blood.

But what do we feel about all this? Christ-like or anti-Christ, what is our relation to him? Worship or identification, pity or revulsion? The long life of the vampire idea resides in just such various possibilities. If the image started out as one seen from the outside, there was always the possibility that it could be seen and felt from within; if the vampire is an Other, he or she was also always a figure in whom one could find oneself. The image allowed that from the start of its appearance in modern western culture (if indeed it had any life before in folk cultures, as many modern western writers like to claim). The narrative devices used ostensibly keep the vampire at a distance: the tale is often presented as one told to the narra-

As pale as death: Lucy as vampire, dressed all in white and puffed like a lizard, the incarnation of engorgement



tor by another narrator who sometimes themselves have only heard it told; even when a direct first-person narrative is used, the vampire is not the narrator. Yet he or she is always the most interesting, memorable and even attractive figure in the tale. If the narrator and all around so easily fall prey to the vampire's magnetism, nay charm, the latter must have something; the narrator often tells us little about him or her self, and other characters, for all the vampire needs their blood, seem anaemic by comparison. The vampire was always a figure to be desired as well as feared, to be identified with as well as distanced from. One of the magical things about *Interview with the Vampire* is the device of presenting the tale as a transcript of a taperecording of the hero telling his story to a journalist; not only does this give the word to the vampire himself, it also draws attention to the fact of doing so. Jody Scott's polymorphous lesbian science-fiction variant carries this breakthrough triumphantly forward in its very title, *I, Vampire*.

In film, there is no such grammar to tell you with whom you are supposed to identify. Without voiceover or relentless subjective camera, it's much less clear who is 'telling' a film. But like vampires in literature, film sets up distance only to have it converted to identification.

The device of the journey, taken from Stoker, often serves to put the vampire at a distance: there is a strong sense of a movement away from what the western, urban-minded audience would find familiar and towards the strangeness of foreignness. Honeymooners, the next step for the young unmarried heterosexual couples supposedly making up the bulk of

the audience, might especially seem ideal identification figures to lead the viewer into the realm of the vampire other. Yet this device is even less insistently (if resistibly) distancing than the narrational devices of written fiction. It is true that few vampire films make the vampire a clear central figure whom we stay with throughout – I can only think of movies such as *Graveyard Shift*, *Nick Knight* or *To Die For*, plus films about real-life 'vampire' Peter Kürten (*Le Vampire de Dusseldorf* and *The Tenderness of Wolves*) and George A. Romero's *Martin*; (the film of *Interview with the Vampire*, supposedly under contract, has not yet seen the light of day). Yet the journey motif has led in some interesting directions, often inviting involvement more than encouraging distance.

In *Kiss of the Vampire* (Don Sharp, 1965) the lacklustre honeymooning couple cannot hold a candle to the vampires who prey on them. With the wife in their thrall, their leader says to the husband, "Now that your wife has tasted one of life's rarer pleasures, do you think she will want to return to you?" Who cannot see that he is right? Who would not rather spend time with the sister and brother, she bursting voluptuously out of her gown, he gazing with intense, melancholy eyes at you as he plays intense, melancholy music at the piano? And who would not prefer that delirious costume ball to sitting at home with this stodgy British hubby? Similarly in *Daughters of Darkness* (Harry Kümel, 1970) a pasty pair of newlyweds wind up on a wintry night in a deserted hotel on the Belgian coast. In the circumstances, who would want to keep to the straight and narrow when you could feel queer with the only other guests,

Delphine Seyrig and companion? Well, of course, many people would, including the man sitting next to me. There's undoubtedly a queer way of reading vampirism, and my neighbour knew that's what I was hoping for.

I want 'queer' here to carry as many meanings as possible. Certainly I don't just mean lesbian and gay, but any apparently marginalised, sexualised identity (which includes many perceptions of women and non-white, even non-Anglo ethnic groups). But I do mean to include the old as well as the new connotations of queer, the despicable as well as the defiant, the shameful as well as the unashamed, the loathing of oddness as well as pride in it. The vampire has played every variation on such queerness. The 1922 *Nosferatu* is a hideous outsider, driven on by his lust, eyes falling out of his head at the sight of Thomas' sturdy frame and unable to resist Mina's deadly allure; to identify with him, as one still might, is to identify with loneliness, self-hatred and loathsome desire. To identify with Bela Lugosi's Count is still to identify with isolated outsiderdom, but already with someone more refined and fascinating than the dullards ranged against him. *Taste the Blood of Dracula* (1969) is one of the most enjoyable exposés of Victorian values in all cinema, with respectable bourgeois fathers secretly randy for the sensation that only Dracula can bring their jaded palates and their daughters killing them off with glee under Dracula's tutelage; Christopher Lee's Count is as straight (and English) as can be, but how deliciously he provokes normal society against itself. And with *Kiss of the Vampire*, *Daughters of Darkness* or *Near Dark*, the vampires become ►

Bloodlines



Nosferatu (1922)

Dracula stalks the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and his power lies in the diversity of fictions he has spawned. By Kim Newman

● Germany 1922. America 1930. Britain 1958. America 1979. America 1992. What have these times and places in common? First, they saw the appearance of major film versions of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), namely F. W. Murnau's *Nosferatu* with Max Schreck, Tod Browning's *Dracula* with Bela Lugosi, Terence Fisher's *Dracula* (*Horror of Dracula*) with Christopher Lee, John Badham's *Dracula* (British-shot but Hollywood through and through) with Frank Langella, and most recently Francis Ford Coppola's *Dracula* with Gary Oldman. Second, they were the site of major economic and social upheavals: the chaos of Weimar, the Great Depression, the post-Suez loss of imperial clout, the Iranian hostage crisis and the fall of Jimmy Carter, and the current recession and the replacement of Bush. Even lesser versions of *Dracula* have come at historical turning points: Jesús Franco's *El Conde Dracula* (Lee again, 1971) at the end of Franco's Spain, Dan Curtis' television *Dracula* (Jack Palance, 1973) with Watergate, Philip Saville's BBC *Count Dracula* (Louis Jourdan, 1979) with the arrival of Margaret Thatcher.

Dracula evidently appeals to nations in crisis. Though the novel draws on the nineteenth-century tradition of gothic and ghostliness, it is almost a scientific romance: indeed, Van Helsing briefly flirts with a 'rational' explanation for Dracula's existence, blaming vampirism on mineral deposits in the Carpathians. Constructed as an invasion fantasy, *Dracula* is as comparable with Sir George Chesney's *The Battle of Dorking* (1871) and H. G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898) as with post-gothic predecessors, such as Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Stevenson's *Strange Case of Dr Jekyll and Mr Hyde* (1886). Stoker's great strategist plots his relocation to London with Bismarckian efficiency, employing property rights and railway timetables

as much as supernatural powers. A literal filthy foreigner, Stoker's Dracula is pitted against an emblematic array of Englishness (with tolerated Americans and Dutchmen generously included, just as Stoker the Dubliner could be included in the London society he was so taken with), before being driven back to his crumbling Third World castle to be properly dispatched.

In my own contribution to the mythos, *Anno Dracula* (1992), I chose to expand on this neglected strand, extrapolating a late-Victorian London in which Dracula has prevailed over Van Helsing and moved from the petty conquests of the wives of solicitors to become a new Prince Consort in control of the Empire. My purpose in the novel, as here, is to open *Dracula* to a variety of interpretations. For despite the attempts of Coppola and screenwriter James V. Hart to invalidate all versions of *Dracula* but Stoker's and their own (implied in the film's opening credit to be one and the same), the strength of the fictions that cluster around *Dracula* lies in their diversity. In assessing the myths – ranging from the *Sesame Street* Count through Bunnica, Deafula, Spermula, Duckula and Granpa Munster to the post-Stoker literary versions of Fred Saberhagen (*The Dracula Tape*, 1975), Peter Tremayne (*Dracula Unborn*, 1977), Brian Stableford (*The Empire of Fear*, 1988), Brian Aldiss (*Dracula Unbound*, 1989) and Dan Simmons (*Children of the Night*, 1991) – we shouldn't follow Coppola and Hart in deeming acceptability to be a matter of how closely a given work follows Stoker's text, but instead look at how effective it is on its own terms as an extrapolation from a set of material that Stoker himself co-opted but didn't always make the best use of.

Stoker's Dracula is a brute, a barbarian, a ravager and an invader, but the cinema has preferred to portray him as a romantic, an aristocrat, a seducer and an outsider. In this, the true ancestor of most Draculas is Dr John Polidori's Lord Ruthven, central character of that odd fragment 'The Vampyre' (1819). Before the arrival of Dracula at the end of the century, Ruthven was the epitome of vampirism, appearing in as dizzying a variety of stage and novel adaptations as Dracula has in twentieth-century movies. Before Ruthven, the folkloric vampire was a mindless peasant more like cinema's flesh-eating zombies; inspired by his patron-tormentor Lord Byron, Polidori recast the vampire as a fatal aristo who wanders Europe 'ruining' the innocent daughters of virtuous but ineffectual upper-middle-class families.

Intriguingly, there have been only two attempts to film 'The Vampyre' – a 1945 cheapie *The Vampire's Ghost* with John Abbott as a pop-eyed bloodsucker running a honky-tonk in the African jungle, and the BBC's new serial opera for Christmas, *The Vampire: A Soap Opera* – as if leeching of Ruthven's characteristics into Dracula's

◀ the thing to be, infinitely preferable to the world they feed off.

Coppola's *Dracula*, like Stoker's, like Christopher Lee's, does not belong with these vampires. He's not a pervert. He might occasionally turn to male flesh (between the scenes in the film as between the chapters in the book) and have on hand female vampires mutually pleasuring each other, but there is none of the delighted and sustained homoeroticism of 'Carmilla' and *Interview with the Vampire*, or *Daughters of Darkness*, *The Velvet Vampire*, *The Hunger*, Barbara Steele in *Danza Macabra* and, a rare male example, the Dutch *Blood Relations*. He may in the end be destroyed for his disruptive desire, but it's really business as usual in terms of the representation of heterosexual male sexuality. Dracula – Stoker's, Lee's and Coppola's – is rampant, driven, rearing sexuality, uncontrollable by modern, domestic, feminised society. It is ugly – beneath the dandy veneer lurks slug-like, leech-like desire; but it's what women want, even in its ugliness: Lucy is ecstatic beneath the half-ape, half-wolf that takes her in the garden and Mina does not flinch, even when her dandy slits his chest open for her. And like Stoker's dripping prose and Hammer's thickly coloured textures and solid *mise en scène*, only more so, Coppola's film is full of blood, stiff with desire, a hymn to engorgement.

Yet Dracula is an outsider, without being socially marginal. One version of the vampire idea precisely presents normal male sexuality as outside of society. If 'society' resides in moral order, in marriage, in the unemotional, un-erotic workplace, then it has no place for driving randiness and uncontrollable priapism, themselves conceived as the nature of male sexuality. Normal male sexuality in this perspective accords straight men too the glamorous badge of outsiderdom. No matter that they also have unequal power over women and children, no matter the vastness of the heterosexual sex industries, no matter the ubiquity of sexual tension at work – at the level of representation, male sexuality is seen as profoundly unsocialised and unsocialisable. Thus Stoker's, Lee's and Coppola's Dracula, thus the dominant image of the vampire, so commandingly virile, so unerringly straight, also expresses the profound contradictoriness of the cultural construction of heterosexual masculinity, at once dominant and disgusting, natural and horrible, mainstream and beyond the pale.

But that's not what I want from vampires. For all its incidental pleasures (some of the costumes, the US stars doing English accents, picking up the allusions as a genre aficionado is bound to), the new *Dracula* was not addressed to me. Just as I held myself off from the man in the seat next to me, so I held myself off from the film. Just as he perhaps believed that all gay men are after all straight men, so the only place for me in relation to this *Dracula* would have been as alienated assistant at the spectacle of straight male engorgement. In a way, the man next to me was right: I had no place there. But with so many other vampires to feast with, I can manage without this one.

'Dracula' opens on 29 January

rendered further adaptations superfluous. The other nineteenth-century vampire archetype is the heroine of J. Sheridan LeFanu's 'Carmilla' (1872), which cunningly rethinks Ruthven as a girl, an apparently useless teenager foisted on *parvenu* families by her Countess mother on the correct assumption that her hosts will be impressed by her title. Carmilla's tactic is to become cloyingly dependent on her female victims, making her the root of the persistent lesbian vampire image and a precursor of the cuckoos-in-the-nest of *The Hand that Rocks the Cradle*, *Poison Ivy* and *Single White Female* (all 1992).

When Browning made his *Dracula* in 1930 he worked not from the novel, but from John Balderston's Broadway version (1927, a revision of a British adaptation by Hamilton Deane, 1925), in which Lugosi had played. The opening reel, as Karl Freund's camera creeps around a cobwebbed Castle Dracula, shows a *Nosferatu* influence, but the remainder opts for drawing-room melodrama. Lugosi moves as elegantly in society as Ruthven (and Sir Francis Varney of *Varney the Vampyre*, 1847) did before him, hand-kissing in a continental manner that makes red-blooded British heroes seethe, politely concealing all manner of suggested improprieties behind his cape. By adopting the full evening dress associated with the Devil in pieces like Marie Corelli's *The Sorrows of Satan* (1895) and Shaw's *Don Juan in Hell* (1903), Lugosi sets a precedent echoed by many subsequent screen Draculas ("How would you like to spend 400 years dressed like a head waiter?" George Hamilton comments in *Love at First Bite*, 1979). His sartorial style was taken up immediately by Carlos Villarias as *El Conde Dracula* in a Spanish version shot simultaneously with the Browning film on the same sets, and was followed by pale imitations such as his own Count Mora (*Mark of the Vampire*, 1935) and Armand Tesla (*The Return of the Vampire*, 1943), David Peel's Baron Meinster (*The Brides of Dracula*, 1960), Ferdy Mayne's Count von Krolock (*Dance of the Vampires*, 1967), Robert Quarry's Count Yorga (*Count Yorga, Vampire*, 1970), and William Marshall's



Dracula (1930)

Prince Mamuwalde (*Blacula*, 1972).

Only Murnau's *Nosferatu* plays on Stoker's actual themes of invasion, nationalism and dominance (by no coincidence is the Beast from the East's first British victim surnamed Westenra, Light of the West). Schreck's vampire (feebly echoed by Klaus Kinski in Werner Herzog's *Nosferatu the Vampyre*, 1979), creeps from primitive Wallachia to a rationalist Bremen which substitutes for London and effectively prompts Murnau to translate Stoker's Irish espousal of English values into a gay soon-to-be exile's vision of the German bourgeoisie. Bringing with him a Pied Piper's swarm of plague rats, the shabbily dressed, stick-insect-thin Graf von Orlok is an invasion from shunned history, dragging stiff-collared burgers into a primal nightmare of disease and cruelty. With his bad breath and worse manners, Von Orlok presents the repulsive side of Stoker's Dracula that has invariably been side-stepped by successive generations of film-makers. And, along with Christopher Lee, *Nosferatu* is perhaps the sole adaptation that seriously attempts, as Stoker does, to be frightening.

It's a rare screen Dracula whose ambitions have the political dimension Stoker insists upon with talk of having "commanded nations and intrigued for them". *Jonathan* (1969) features Paul-Albert Krumm as a ranting Hitler lookalike presiding over vampire orgies staged like party rallies; Christopher Lee in *The Satanic Rites of Dracula* (1973) poses as a property developer and schemes to end his misery by wiping out the human race with a bio-engineered plague. Perhaps most ambitiously, David Carradine, succeeding his father in *Sundown: The Vampire in Retreat* (1990), works to integrate the vampire nation with humanity and, in a finale more Christian than anything in Coppola's film, earns the forgiveness of God as vampirekind is reconciled with the Church and the fear of the cross lifted from them.

The 'classical' Draculas of the period between 1930 and 1970 follow the Ruthven mode, icily romantic and ruthlessly predatory, making conquests not for their own bloody pleasure but to score off the stuffy and puritanical Van Helsing. Perhaps unique is *Son of Dracula* (1943), in which Louise Allbritton seduces Lon Chaney Jr in order to become an immortal vampire, even marrying the Transylvanian Count, although she intends to spurn him in favour of her mortal lover. In Chaney's Count Alucard, as in John Carradine's gloomy Dracula of *House of Frankenstein* (1944) and *House of Dracula* (1945) and Francis Lederer's communist-bloc refugee in *The Return of Dracula* (1958), there are traces of a perhaps sincere romanticism which will emerge fully thirty years later. This strain goes ruthlessly into remittance during Christopher Lee's long reign at Hammer films. A bluntly disdainful

tyrant, Lee puts the moves on the heroines of *Dracula* (1958), *Dracula, Prince of Darkness* (1965), *Dracula Has Risen From the Grave* (1968), *The Scars of Dracula* (1970) and *Dracula AD 1972* (1972) to avenge a slight (the staking of a concubine, an attempted exorcism) and make their menfolk suffer. There is no suggestion that Lugosi or Lee feels anything for those they vampirise: their quarrels are with Van Helsing and his acolytes, and the struggles of these films are vigorously masculine.

When Hammer had exhausted the *Dracula* material, it passed out of English hands, first into such modernist American rereadings as *Count Yorga, Vampire* and *Blacula*. There followed continental mutations such as Franco's *El Conde Dracula* (first but not last to trumpet itself as the "definitive" Stoker text, *El Saga de los Draculas* (1973) and *Jonathan* (Hans W. Geissendörfer's serious and neglected political reading of the novel), culminating in Paul Morrissey's oddly effective *Blood for Dracula* (1974), in which Udo Kier's sickly nineteenth-century man is nauseated in the 20s by non-virgin blood and destroyed with hammer and sickle by revolutionary Joe Dallesandro. Then came a series of versions, culminating in Coppola's current entry, that come to grips with both the novel and earlier film adaptations: Dan Curtis' *Dracula*, scripted by Richard Matheson, John Badham's *Dracula*, inspired by an Edward Gorey-designed revival of the



Dracula Has Risen From the Grave (1968)

1927 play, the BBC's *Count Dracula*, scripted by Gerald Savory and containing more of the novel than any other adaptation, Herzog's *Nosferatu the Vampyre*, a dead butterfly of a film pinned to Murnau's vivid original, *Love at First Bite*, which wittily makes of itself a sequel to the Lugosi movie, and even the Jamie Gillis pornos, *Dracula Sucks* (1979, aka *Lust at First Bite*), which reuses almost all the 1930 script, and *Dracula Exotica* (1981, aka *Love at First Gulp*), which makes a few distinctive additions to the myth.

Blatantly in evidence is an increasing and genuine romantic feeling, first observable in Robert Quarry's fatal crush on Mariette Hartley in *The Return of Count Yorga* (1971) and in Paul Naschy's chubbily agonised and suicidal vampire in

the revealingly titled *El Gran Amor del Conde Dracula* (1972). In more serious adaptations, Palance's hollow-cheeked and ethnically correct Carpathian broods over the girl he lost and pursues her 1890s lookalike (Fiona Lewis); Kinski's bitter, self-pitying *Nosferatu* dotes on Isabelle Adjani; Langella's curly-haired *latino* stud in open-necked romance-hero white shirt pays genuine court to Kate Nelligan; and Jourdan's aged *roué* for once seems sincere when confronted by the authentic period prettiness of flirt Susan Penhaligon and gamine Judi Bowker. The Hamilton and Gillis films are obviously more concerned with love (and, in the porno movies, sex) than bloodlust, some sort of apotheosis being reached in *Dracula Exotica* when, under the influence of true love, Dracula is transformed from a bat into a dove. This acceptance of a vampire as a deserving lover is evident among female-themed vampire movies too, as witness *Lust for a Vampire* (1971), *Le Rouge aux lèvres*/*Daughters of Darkness* (1971), *The Velvet Vampire* (1971), *Lèvres de sang* (1975, the best of Jean Rollin's many contributions) and *The Hunger* (1983). Such interpretations doubtless contributed to the establishment of the (largely female) audience for the sympathetic/glam vampire novels of Anne Rice (*The Vampire Lestat*, 1986), Chelsea Quinn Yarbro (*Hotel Transylvania*, 1978), Suzy McKee Charnas (*The Vampire Tapestry*, 1983), Nancy Collins (*Sunglasses After Dark*, 1990) and Freda Warrington (*A Taste of Blood Wine*, 1992).

In many ways magnificent, Coppola's *Dracula* suffers from a fatal misreading of the original material, a fault it has in common with Hart's *Hook*. Like Matheson in 1973, Hart reveals Stoker's vampire as the historical Impaler and revives the most tiresome of monster motivations (cf *The Mummy*, *Blacula*): the search for the reincarnation of the lost love. The character is capable of myriad interpretations, but for all the wonders of his setting, Oldman takes his place in the losers' box with weary John Carradine (*Billy the Kid vs Dracula*), desperate David Niven (*Vampira*), Frank Zappa-ish Zandor Vorkov (*Dracula vs Frankenstein*) and frankly miscast Alex D'Arcy (*Blood of Dracula's Castle*) and Miles O'Keefe (*Waxwork*). Depending heavily on the image of Dracula as a faithful lover and centuried romantic, the film has trouble when he appears as a rubberised bat – or wolf-monster. In his heart, this Dracula is less the brute of Stoker's original than the naive and sentimental Hamilton of *Love at First Bite*, but, even given that angle on the mythos, Coppola (like Badham and Herzog) comes short. Despite strenuous bosom-heaving and tears trickling down prosthetic cheeks, this Dracula, begging pity from Mina and the audience, is a whiner rather than a gallant, sadly lacking in demonic passion and, ultimately, the literal dead centre of a film so visually strong it deserves a more potent King Vampire.

Trust the teller

After ‘Hook’, screenwriter James V. Hart has moved to ‘Dracula’, translating it from horror story to fairy tale. He talks to Henry Sheehan

Just about the last person to receive credit for a film’s success – down the line after the cinematographer, composer, and producer’s brother-in-law – is the screenwriter. It’s a phenomenon born from the long-entrenched Hollywood practice of assigning platoons of writers to rewrites, and nurtured by a vulgarised notion of auteurism. However, in just one year, writer James (Jim) V. Hart has managed to stake his own claim to prime authorship as the screenwriter for *Hook*, and for Coppola’s new *Dracula*.

“Nobody cares about the writer”, says Hart. In tones from which the bitterness has been drained by success, he recounts the experience of being largely ignored amid the hype surrounding the release of *Hook*. In fact, he was not the only writer to receive credit – Malia Scotch Marmo shared it for screenwriting while Nick Castle shared it for story. Yet, Hart points out, “I wrote the original script, my name is in first position. I’m glad Malia shares credit, but the film is still 90 per cent what I wrote. But when you work with Steven, it doesn’t matter. Everyone thinks it was his idea and he made the movie, that he dreamed it all up and it all came out of his mind”.

Oddly enough, Hart has robbed himself of some of the credit for the new *Dracula*. Emphatically, he insists that he has written an unusually loyal adaptation of Stoker’s tale. And even with *Hook*, he insists that it is his loyalty to the original text – James Barrie’s *Peter Pan* – that distinguishes his approach.

It isn’t so much that he is attracted to late-Victorian or Edwardian fantasy, Hart explains, as to differences between source material and the adaptations drawn from them. “*Hook* and *Dracula* are both Victorian/Edwardian fantasy adventures”, admits Hart, “but I think that one of the reasons I was attracted to them was that I discovered books very late in life. I grew up on Disney films, Hammer B movies, the drive-in; I grew up in Texas. I think that *Peter Pan* was burned in me like a genetic code, but when I read James Barrie’s novel – the same thing as with Stoker – I was blown away by how different it was from Walt Disney and Mary Martin. I didn’t read Barrie’s novel until I was thirty-three years old; I didn’t read *Dracula* until 1977, when I was thirty years old. It’s almost like finding out that the little old man sitting on the street corner begging for food is J. D. Salinger.

“So to rediscover as an adult a new truth in what you have believed for many years to have been the truth immediately attracted me to Stoker.

There’s a very complex character at the centre of Stoker’s novel. It’s not about a guy in a tuxedo who wears a red sash and drinks blood, and it’s not about a blood-sucking monster; it’s about a seductive, powerful warrior prince who fell from grace and is seeking to come back. This is not a *Dracula* I’ve ever seen”.

But while it’s true that Hart’s adaptation pays a great deal of attention to Stoker, the story has been altered in crucial ways, even in a way that might have horrified Stoker himself. While remaining faithful to much of the plot and most of the characterisations of the novel, Hart has effected a profound transformation of *Dracula* from horror story to fairy tale. No longer is this the story of respectable English men and women threatened by a foreign ghoul quick to take advantage of any moral lapse. Hart’s *Dracula* is the tale of a brave prince transformed into a monster by romantic despair, and how a love which survives the ages starts calling him back to humanity.

“What we brought to the book was a love story that doesn’t exist in the novel”, Hart admits. “I had to figure out a way to tell Stoker in the way Stoker was written, but to make it accessible to a modern audience. Whenever I had discussed *Dracula* in mixed company during the past fifteen years, it was always the women who had read the novel... And then Leonard Wolf, who wrote *The Annotated Frankenstein* and *The Annotated Dracula*, opened a window to the seductive powers of this character”. Wolf’s book fills in the historical sources of the novel, examines Stoker’s metaphors for their sexual content, and provides biographical analogues. Hart admired Wolf so much that at one early point the two collaborated on the screenplay, and, Wolf’s influence, says Hart, persisted in his own interpretation of the novel, including its autobiographical elements.

Setting Stoker on the couch

“Stoker’s writing is like a confession of his fear, a justification of his manhood”, says Hart. “That’s why there are all these great handsome, heroic Victorian men who are going to stamp out the bad guy that’s messing with their women. My ending is different, in that it plays into the love story that I try to fit into Stoker’s narrative. The novel ends with the birth of the child. And seven years after the birth of that boy-child, Mina and Van Helsing and everybody take him back to the scene where Quincy and Dracula died. When reading that – and the way Leonard set it up – I instinctively wondered what woman would do that unless she was taking her child back to where daddy died? Now, true, the baby was born thirteen months after Dracula died, but I don’t know what the gestation period is for a vampire child. Leonard says it’s nine months, but I don’t know that for a fact.

“If you look at Mina in Stoker, her whole view of this creature changes once they share blood. Much of what she says in the film is right out of

Stoker: she even gets Van Helsing to admit that he respects and admires this creature, which is right out of Stoker too. So Mina changes, she has sympathy for this creature they’re hunting. And that spoke to me when I was trying to figure out what to do with the women characters. It’s really license: maybe we set Stoker on the couch, but I hope we haven’t done him an injustice. I feel very strongly that I’ve tried to support his narrative rather than mess with it. We certainly haven’t messed with it the way everybody else has over the years”.

This notion of loyalty-through-reinterpretation also informs Coppola’s direction, which once again plays into the story re-imagined as a fairy tale. Every hint of haunting architecture or ominous costuming is exaggerated through rococo stylisation. Dracula’s castle is a pile of towers impossibly perched on a cliff, while the parchment-dry, bouffant-haired Count (grey-haired and distinguished in the book) greets Jonathan Harker at the door wearing a scarlet cape with an enormous train (as opposed to a formal, basic black ensemble in the novel). The film’s sense of geography is brilliant, delineating space as a function of emotion, so that a small patio or ruined abbey may include a bewildering number of hideaways, while a whole continent or ocean can be traversed in a panicky flash.

This adornment requires some complementary streamlining, most of which comes at the expense of Stoker’s class resentments. Stoker’s Dracula is not just a monster, but an imperious employer to the sullenly dutiful Harker. Dracula’s assault on Harker’s fiancée, Mina, is a further abuse of aristocratic privilege, an upper-class parasite feeding on the hardworking and sexually restrained bourgeoisie. The novel even climaxes with a democratic assault by Harker and his peers on Dracula and his servants.

The characters’ class-consciousness is not entirely eliminated in the film, and given the reshaping of the material, its absence doesn’t hurt much, except in the figure of Lucy, the high-spirited blonde from an upper-class background who, after an indulgent flirtation with the Count, turns into a child-killing vampire. In Hart’s script, Van Helsing, the middle-European vampire hunter, simply dismisses her as a “devil’s concubine” with a predisposition towards satanic sex. Even in fairy tales, sexually aggressive women come to exemplary tragic ends.

Hart jokingly calls Lucy a victim of “Unsafe vampire sex... and Lucy is a spoiled prattler – Leonard Wolf calls her a prattler, a hoyden – with what is almost a modern approach to her sexuality. I think she says in the novel: ‘Why can’t a woman marry three men or as many men as she wants?’ And Lucy is basically a quick snack in fast food for Dracula. I think Lucy pays for her unsafe vampire sex, her brazen attitude towards the world. She’s spoiled, she’s rich, and she can do anything she wants. Mina represents the

other side of Victorian womanhood, all corseted up tight. She is suppressing her sexuality, where Lucy is flaunting hers. Lucy pays the price for her wanton ways. Just like any woman today who has sex with multiple partners and is not practising safe sex is going to pay a price”.

It’s not the scene I wrote...

Hart’s concerns emerge with clarity in this version of *Dracula*, at least in part because they are in harmony with Coppola’s preoccupations with the way his protagonists achieve salvation in the face of death and disaster. But his themes didn’t sit so well with Spielberg’s: in fact, on a fundamental level, they clash, in that Spielberg’s heroes are invariably in flight from a strong, loving and demanding woman, while Hart’s are crossing heaven and earth in order to find one. “Listen, I love what Steven did”, says Hart. “He is probably the only director who could have brought it to life at the scale at which it was brought to life. There are things that he misses, that I miss, things that are not in there that should be. But I’ve seen the film fifty times and I still love watching it with an audience.

“Tiger Lily and the Indians were in all my drafts and were cut out for political reasons; they were not even shot. I wrote a very specific voice for Tinker Bell... I made her a sniping, feisty, tough task-driver for Peter, who was madly in love with her. But it was rewritten very poorly in my opinion; it took all the edge off her.

“I still think it’s Steven’s best storytelling, but I wish he had left in the footage he cut out after the preview. I wish people had seen the two-hour-and-twenty-three-minute version. It’s a story about mothers and how Wendy became the mother to the Lost Boys, and now that’s not there. The other thing I miss sorely is that Peter went to rescue his children, but now he doesn’t. It’s a complete sequence that wasn’t shot because they ran out of time and money. I also miss the battle I wrote: the battle that’s there is my battle, but Steven circled all the good moments and gave them to Malia to arrange, who did a great job, but it’s not the battle I wrote. It was an amalgamation of the disenfranchised elements of Neverland coming together to free Peter’s children. And the flying sequence turns into a joke instead of a celebration of youth and what it would be like for an adult to fly”.

Hart later observes: “My belief in the material is what every piece of talent in this business is looking for. We spend millions of dollars in the studios every year on producers and actors and directors who don’t produce a film. I show up with two scripts that nobody wanted to develop, and they attracted Spielberg and Coppola and amazing casts. Pretty soon it won’t be my turn any more, but I still believe that it’s the material that is the driving force in this industry, an industry which doesn’t look on the writer as even a third-class citizen. I’m trying to change that a little bit”.

Invasion of the blood

Dracula as a premature investor in Docklands, as Welles' Citizen Kane, as a geriatric Valentino – Iain Sinclair pursues the undead

Bloodmoney, liquidity. “Dracula sucks in £21m”, thrills the *Evening Standard*. “Money is flowing as copiously as blood”. Blood is now perceived as a commodity, a prime asset. Uninfected blood (none of that Third World stuff) is liquid gold, life-sustaining. We quake in fear of a run on the blood banks: unruly aliens threatening our hard-earned immunity from poverty. Blood weddings (thirteen-year-old script plus Winona Ryder hooks Coppola, secures funding) open untapped veins of credit. The production coagulates through each of its weird sisters: Columbia/Zoetrope/Osiris. Zoetrope being a shamanic toy, a slit drum offering the illusion of movement. And Osiris? The god of death, the scattered one whose percentage points are the privilege of stardom. “The seventh-best opening for any film in history”.

Why not cast Sinatra?

In Hollywood, history is what a director becomes the morning after a lousy preview. It is that which can be rewritten by accountants. Dracula's selling point is that he belongs to history: his transfixion on the end of an iron toothpick has been shown more times than the assassination of Kennedy. He has become an unofficial elder statesman, a roving ambassador. He's been undead as long as Richard Nixon and has recently acquired the same kind of posthumous (but still breathing) respectability. He is even beginning to look like Ronald Reagan, after a course of *gravitas* injections.

For this latest final comeback (why didn't they cut the make-up budget by casting Sinatra?), a team of opticians grafted hard scleral shells over the Count's eyes; lenses last seen screwed into the latex mask of the youthful Orson Welles, to transform him into the power-vampire Citizen Kane. Raving within his Californian pastiche of a Transylvanian castle, Kane was the independent shadow, the reflection that W. R. Hearst refused to acknowledge when he looked in the mirror. Hearst's arteries of black propaganda return us to headlines proclaiming self-fulfilling prophecies of blood-money triumph. Blood treated with light transformed to loot.

F. F. Coppola, by temperament a binger, began as a celluloid junkie, sitting red-eyed at his dawn movieola to impress the exploitation-factory boss. He earned his shot: *Dementia 13* (1963, axe murderer attacks noble Irish family). Things are very different now:

middle-European aristo bites back. It is still a controlled environment, no rogue skies, no weather. There are borrowed London streets, dizzy with the usual hyperactive extras. But prestige grants the time to prepare, squads of graduate technicians. The most expensive tent show on earth. It's more like a moon shot. The director of photography, Michael Ballhaus, has survived fifteen Fassbinders and is hot from Scorsese's *GoodFellas*. There are ample funds to take care of “contact lenses, prosthetics, blood tubes, wolves, insects, babies”. What we have here are all the classic subterranean genre elements – with major transfusions of respectability in the form of cash. Corman plus budget, that's the spin.

What we do not have, alas, is Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, which is how this season's model has chosen to market itself. Authenticity, certificates of heritage approval. Unfortunately, the *Dracula* published by Archibald Constable in 1897 was not Bram Stoker's either. He would not have claimed sole copyright. The vampire could be traced in folklore back to, at least, the seventeenth century. Stoker constructed, from many sources, an immensely persuasive hybrid: a nightmare capable of earthing the unconscious terrors of his own time. He blended Polidori's doomed Byronic wanderer with the sexual ambiguities and pleasurable traumas of Sheridan LeFanu's ‘Carmilla’. He borrowed the multi-voiced narrative dynamically exploited by Willkie Collins in *The Woman in White*. Coppola can only pay lip service by making reference to typewriters, phonographs, letters, journals. He refuses to fracture his favoured method of orchestrated independent sequences, interspersed with seizures of moralistic cross-cutting. The hieratic ironies which carried the *Godfather* saga now decay into a gamey vulgarity: we are forced directly from a vivid blood transfusion to a side of beef on to the dinner table.

Stoker persuades by stealth, by the slow accumulation of arduously researched detail. Longueurs the cinema can never indulge. Coppola is most comfortable with a form of serial opera, millennial rock ‘n’ roll with all

the stops out. We are offered a necrophile *Love Story*, the “love that never dies”. It takes 400 years, but as the sun sets over the Carpathians, Vlad the Impaler gets his girl. Aria and recitative. Climax and curtain. The thousand small deaths of visual orgasm. The nosferatu, this geriatric Valentino, moves in from the wings, where he lurks through the body of Stoker's text, to take centre stage as an absinthe-tipping masher. The focus shifts from Stoker's morbidly repressed head sex to a psychotic anatomy lesson. The action, once visited entirely on those regions between neck and brain, now runs amok. Gang rape by an animated eiderdown, top-dollar nipples rearing out of liquid bedspreads, werewolves guzzling pudenda on top of rustic sepulchres. It's wild, but it belongs to the industrial parasites whose idea of class is to add numerals after a title (just like royalty), to manufacture a spurious respectability. *Dracula* CLX.

Unspecified horrors accumulate

The most serious division between the original *Dracula* and this interpretation is the film's refusal to inhabit a true psychic geography. In compensation, Coppola provides a battery of shock effects, interesting and driven, which are perfectly tuned to the mores of late-Victorian illusionist theatre. Dry ice, gunpowder, ghost mirrors, double-exposure, forced-perspective miniatures. A world Stoker would have been happy to acknowledge, a world to which he would have been granted access through his long association with Henry Irving. (It has been suggested that Irving's emphatic sibilants and consummate stagecraft contributed to the actor/manager aspects of Count Dracula.) But behind these seductive smokescreens there needs to be a living city. Coppola, marooned on his sound stages, has nothing as evocative as the list of addresses to which Dracula's chests of earth must be delivered: 197, Chicksand Street, Mile End New Town, Jamaica Lane, Bermondsey. Unspecified horrors accumulate around such specific map references. We should not forget that the Count banked with Coutts, and was a prema-

ture investor in Docklands. From his abbey at Purfleet (currently an oil refinery), his properties circumnavigated London. Those poisoned bolt holes of mouldy soil are probably still in place, sustaining all the mushroom towers of Thatcherite folly.

The dying century incubates an anxious sleep. And who better to interpret and give form to this anxiety than the custard-pallor Gary Oldman, with his tumescent Versailles pompadour? (Let's hear it for Stuart Artingstall, stylist and wigmaker.) Oldman has shuffled the tarot pack of paranoid icons: Sid Vicious, Joe Orton, Lee Harvey Oswald. A perfect preparation for this customised plague manikin. He is the manifestation of disease, campy and fatal, a revenant elaborately made-up for an Aids benefit. He is the needle with which Coppola immunises complacency.

But does it suffice, this *fin-de-siècle* retread? We have lost our nerve, and seem incapable of breeding our own nightmares. We live in an age of plagiarism and theft, dignified as ‘post-modernist’. Victorian guilts and sweats brought forth *Jekyll and Hyde*, *The Mystery of a Hansom Cab*, *The Invisible Man*, *Dracula*: prophetic syntheses of a general trauma. Dreams that were real. Dreams whose bleakest features were soon to be enacted upon the landscape, as literature passed seamlessly into the headlines of the *Police Gazette*. Edwin Drood mutating into Montague Druitt, the Ripper suspect.

Now we are condemned to rummage through the attic, brush down Frankenstein, Sweeney Todd, all the familiar nursery ghouls. Our worst imaginings surround us. They are already on the streets, plucking at our coat tails. Coppola's account of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* succeeds best when it taps our present panic. The chaos of the Balkans, the collapse of communism, a chill wind from the east. The same invasion paranoia was lanced in the 50s by a cycle of low-budget science-fiction quickies. Invasion of the blood is worse, red sex perverts wanting to bite into our virgin meat. “Civilisation vs syphillisation”, as Anthony Hopkins' post-Lecter Van Helsing puts it. A bad case of poacher turned gamekeeper. The cannibal residue in his pale smile is appropriate. All the garlic that Coppola once crushed into spaghetti sauce has to be nailed to the walls to keep the infection out. It's like treating Aids with vitamin C. We fear for our investments. Dracula is raiding a depressed market. There is no mistaking his kinship with tired royal bloodlines. He's off his grub, won't touch his wine. The man's obviously anorexic. This is what appals the director. Even the scumiest Mafia torpedo enjoys his meat balls and Chianti, before garrotting the competition. Vlad, with his bulimic blood-gorging, has to be decapitated, returned to the Church. We have to understand that a United Nations posse, armed with Winchester repeaters out of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show, can take care of any upstart, vampire ayatollah.



Gary Oldman as Dracula, sharpening his appetite

ESSAYS IN MAD LOVE

A rich and unsettling mix of sexual passion, maternal images of love and unrepentant sentimentality is the hallmark of the silent cinema of Frank Borzage. By Tom Gunning



● Le Giornate del Cinema Muto in Pordenone, Italy, the international festival of silent films, remains the most unconventional of international film festivals. With marathon screenings of twelve to fourteen hours a day, all accompanied by live music (from new compositions for small orchestras to solo performances by a multinational battery of strong-armed but nimble-fingered pianists), the Giornate presents films with next to no commercial possibilities to an audience of scholars, archivists and buffs willing to travel thousands of miles to see movies that are as rare as they are neglected. But perhaps the most unusual aspect of the festival lies in its lack of regard for critical canons. While silent cinema is already a specialised taste, the festival programmers go further, shunning classics in favour of periods and films that have been left out of the standard history books, with a predilection for films made before 1914. Previous Pordenone festivals have focused on films made in the US, Russia, Denmark and Germany before the 20s, showing many that have never had a reputation in any critical canon (and, I might add, many which do not deserve one). This is not to say that the mediocre is enshrined, but rather that the Giornate delivers a revealing sense of context from saturation screenings of closely related films of the same period.

The centre of the festival this year was the presentation of all the surviving films of Frank Borzage. Borzage could hardly be described as a new discovery: not only were his silent films admired around the globe (he won the first Academy Award for directing in 1929), but historians such as Jean Mitry have always cited him as a defining factor in the development of American cinema. He was canonised as an auteur by both the *Cahiers* critics of the 50s and Andrew Sarris in the 60s, when other silent directors had dropped out of sight. But he has rarely penetrated into broader critical consciousness as have Griffith, Stroheim or DeMille. His most famous silent film, *Seventh Heaven*, has been overshadowed by Murnau's *Sunrise*, released by the Fox studio in the same year (1927), and also starring Janet Gaynor.

Borzage's unrepentant sentimentality and romanticism pose a barrier to many contemporary audiences – at least initially. In fact, I have found that the conviction with which Borzage infuses his love stories usually overwhelms all but the most cynical. Curiously, Borzage's sincerity often seems more foreign to contemporary audiences than DeMille's cynical *pas de deux* with bourgeois morality and the forces of consumer modernism featured at last year's Giornate. But Borzage's cinematic style reveals a powerful sensuality at the centre of his sentiment. If this emotional power feels more sticky than DeMille's witty hypocrisy, it is partly because it seems to claim a hold on us, a hold whose sources can make us feel oddly uncomfortable. Borzage's sentiment threatens to break through conventional morality rather than to buttress it, with an intensity of libido that explains why André Breton pointed to

Impelled by longing: Charles Farrell and Janet Gaynor in Borzage's 'Street Angel' (1928), one of his silent movie allegories in which love turns the world upside down

Seventh Heaven as an object lesson in Surrealist *amour fou*.

Commentators on Borzage's cinema have tended to stress his spirituality, and religious allegories do turn up in films from *Street Angel* in the 20s to *Strange Cargo* or *Disputed Passage* in the sound era. Borzage's silent films often climax with miraculous resurrections and cures, in which the strength of love triumphs over death, blindness, or paralysis. However, it is the intense emotionality of these miracles as an expression of desire between couples rather than religious sublimation that gives them their power. The unstoppable march of the paralysed veteran (through a blizzard, no less) that ends Borzage's last silent film *Lucky Star*, or the blind Chico's rush through the crowds celebrating the armistice in *Seventh Heaven*, are less demonstrations of faith than the unerring flight of characters mastered by desire. The implausibility of these endings demands from us not so much faith in things unseen as an emotional participation in the visualisation of physical and personal devotion. What moves us in these climaxes is the spectacle of bodies moving through space, impelled by longing – *l'amour fou* imaged by cinema.

Erotic charge

Perhaps the major revelation of the Borzage retrospective was a fragmentary film from the end of the silent period, *The River* (1928). Although I had heard critics such as Raymond Durgnat refer to the erotic charge of this all-but-lost film, I was still unprepared for the intensity of its physical and psychological intimacy. Just over half the original film is preserved, and the print shown at Pordenone contains only the scenes between romantic leads Charles Farrell and Mary Duncan (the only other character who appears is a deaf mute, who serves to emphasise their isolation). Scenes of Farrell's conflict with Duncan's former lover, who returns to claim her and nearly kills Farrell, are missing. But while the exclusive focus on the two lovers in the surviving material may intensify the film's sense of claustrophobic desire, there is no question that the original movie portrayed a world filled by a love affair between a worldweary woman and a naive young man ("Haven't you known any women?", Duncan asks provocatively, with the biblical sense of "knowing" apparently over Farrell's head as he replies, "No ma'am, only my mother").

The River opens as a construction camp empties itself after further work has been cancelled. Hundreds of men cross rope bridges over the valley to the railway station above, leaving the camp a ghost town, in which Duncan alone remains, determined to live without male companionship. As she sits by the river in the empty camp, Farrell appears, floating naked down the river, and a powerful encounter between innocence and experience begins. As frequently happens in Borzage's films, conventional gender stereotypes are inverted. Duncan displays a confident and sultry sexual knowledge; Farrell, a fidgety, nervous boyish ignorance. Duncan becomes frustrated by Farrell's lack of action and turns

nearly every daily undertaking into a sexual invitation, including an erotic bedside checker game. Farrell becomes obsessed with proving himself a better man than Duncan's absent lover (whose pet crow flutters through the couple's cabin with an evil eye), at one climactic point displacing the film's pent-up sexual energy into an orgy of tree-chopping in an attempt to prove his masculinity.

If Farrell avoids sex through violent action, Duncan triumphs through physical closeness. At one point she accidentally stabs Farrell, and Borzage presents the injury as another step in physical intimacy. The film ends as Duncan crawls into bed with Farrell after he has nearly frozen to death, the warmth of her sexuality reviving him.

While *The River* may be the most explicit of Borzage's romances of the late 20s, the same elements crop up in all four films he made with Charles Farrell at Fox (*Seventh Heaven*, *Street Angel*, *Lucky Star*, *The River*). Although they range from the urban continental settings of Paris and Naples to Americana locales (*Lucky Star* and *The River*), the films all create a self-enclosed world dominated by the intimacy and desire of their protagonists. Janet Gaynor's performances in the three films that preceded *The River* may lack Duncan's sexual maturity, but her portrayal of the awakening of desire gives her girlish characters an extraordinary sensuality. The scene in which she watches Chico undress during their first night together in *Seventh Heaven* expresses Borzage's capacity to feel comfortable with female desire, something not common in Hollywood directors.

In describing the difference between American and Soviet cinema, Sergei Eisenstein focused on technical terminology. Americans use the term 'close-up', while the Soviets called close framing 'large' shots. The Americans, Eisenstein pointed out, thought in terms of viewpoint, while the Soviets considered the significant enlargement of the filmed object. One could add that American cinema thinks in terms of physical proximics, with close-ups supplying not only enlargement of a detail but (potentially at least) physical intimacy.

Borzage's cinema, even more than Griffith's, exemplifies American cinema's extraordinary involvement with bodies and physical touching, an erotics of the cinema as tactile as it is visual. His characters often collide physically, even violently, before they are emotionally attuned, as in the spanking Farrell gives Gaynor in the opening of *Lucky Star* and the bite on the leg she deals him in return. The protagonists' eventual emotional union usually centres on creating a place that attempts to exclude all but their love. The intimate settings of Borzage's romances, like Chico's seventh-floor flat in *Seventh Heaven*, are literally love nests, places where lovers physically shelter each other in a space defined by their mutual desire.

An extraordinary close-up from Borzage's first big hit, *Humoresque* (1920), exposes something of the source of this sheltering physicality. At one point in this saga of Jewish mother love, Borzage films the young son protected by his mother from the boy's less sympathetic father, one eye of his face looking up at the ►

◀ camera, framed by Vera Gordon's ample chin as he clings to her bosom. The intensity of Borzage's lovers (as well as the slight discomfort their intimacy causes the viewer) comes, I believe, from a rediscovery of a sheltering maternal intimacy, which treads on the edges of one of culture's most basic taboos. Borzage, commenting on the appeal of *Humoresque*, proclaimed mother love the most dramatic and beautiful of all human expressions, a universal subject, "that knows neither creed, colour, race, language or climate". However, I am not annexing Borzage to the widespread analysis that equates most Hollywood scenarios with the stages of the Oedipal complex. Rather, the emotional centre of Borzage's cinema lies in a fantasy of recovering a maternal unity, opposed to the more common Freudian melodrama of renunciation of the mother and identification with the father. Borzage's physical intimacy seems pre-Oedipal, a romance founded on a joyful merging in a protective maternal space.

Recent work by psychoanalytical film theorists (such as E. Ann Kaplan, whose *Motherhood and Representation* provides an important reference point) has examined women's melodramas from a pre-Oedipal point of view, privileging the experience of separation from the mother rather than alignment with the law of the father. I believe that Borzage's late silent romances rehearse a similar scenario, which explains the appropriate boyishness and even helplessness of the characters Farrell repeatedly portrayed. The heaven these characters attain, and even the miraculous cures they undergo, evoke a return to a sheltering maternal world.

If Borzage's obsession finds its purest fulfilment in this quartet of romances, a concern with strong female characters runs through the extent of his career, producing genre films that often push against conventional story and character patterns. His earliest surviving films as a director are Westerns. These films – *The Pitch o' Chance* (1915), *Nugget Jim's Pardner* (1916), *Until They Get Me* (1917) and *The Gun Woman* (1918) – show an unusual attention to female characters, and a frequent obsession with delivering them from moral rejection or masculine mistreatment. *Until They Get Me* introduces the 'moppet who becomes a desirable woman' character that Janet Gaynor will play in the later romances. Pauline Starke's irresistible tomboy Margy supplies the moral authority for the film, helping the unjustly accused fugitive to escape from her Mountie boyfriend.

But it is Texas Guinan's performance in *The Gun Woman* as a gold-rush gambling-hall proprietor, the Tigress, that most overturns genre patterns. The Tigress falls in love with a stranger, to whom she entrusts her savings in order to set them up together in a new life far away. When she discovers that the stranger has instead used the funds to open a saloon at a new gold strike and denies that he ever promised to marry her, she gives him one month to pay her back. Finally confronting him when he misses the deadline, she shoots him dead, telling the local sheriff: "He's mine

by every law, except the one made by man". As the stranger dies, Borzage provides one last close-up of the couple's now deadly intimacy.

Although Richard Koszarski tells me that original publicity for *The Gun Woman* proclaimed that Guinan proved herself tougher than William S. Hart, the Tigress does not really take on a masculine role. In fact, Borzage's Westerns remind us that the masculinisation of the genre was a gradual process. The literature that early Westerns drew on did not restrict women to background roles of whores or school teachers, but frequently centred on female experiences. The Tigress descends directly from Belasco's *Girl of the Golden West*, and Margy from Bret Harte's *M'Liss*, with their female characters whose strength and determination in a predominantly masculine world provided the dramatic centre of much of the early Western literature. Borzage's Westerns maintained a space for a feminine authority and subjectivity.

Class prejudice

If Borzage's Westerns in the first decade of the century revolved around strong female characters and dealt with emotional union and betrayal more than contests of masculine power, his work in the 20s centred on more domestic themes. Following the success of *Humoresque*, he turned primarily to domestic melodramas (although one late Western, *The Valley of Silent Men* of 1922 still reflects the earlier pattern, with a powerful performance by Alma Rubens competing with the Canadian Rockies for mastery of the film's wide-open spaces). Though the films he made for Cosmopolitan and First National in the early 20s seem more conventional than the later films for Fox, Borzage's transformation of even these more traditional women's film melodramas sets the scene for the later romances.

Unfortunately, most of these films survive only in incomplete prints, though enough of them remains to enable performance style and directorial attitude to shine through. *Back Pay* (1922) and *The Nth Commandment* (1923) are based on works by Fannie Hurst (as is *Humoresque*), and present contemporary romances in urban settings from the point of view of a self-sacrificing woman. *The Nth Commandment* captures a range of everyday urban settings in a manner that predicts Vidor's *The Crowd*: the department-store bargain basement where the main characters work, double-decker bus rides, skating rinks and Chinese restaurants. Both films end with their heroines (Seena Owen in *Back Pay* and Coleen Moore in *The Nth Commandment*) caring for invalid lovers. These self-sacrificing, nurturing women epitomise Borzage's maternal image of love, with the emphasis falling as much on the fulfilment of the helpless men in the arms of their nurses as on the resignation of the women themselves.

Borzage also made a trio of maternal melodramas, dealing directly with the sufferings of women who are separated from their children by conventional morality or narrow class prejudice. All these films fit more or less into what E. Ann Kaplan calls the "maternal sacrifice paradigm", whose archetype she traces to *East*

Lynne, Ellen Woods' 1861 novel which underwent numerous adaptations as both stage and film melodrama. However, Borzage's films resist Woods' conventional ideology, being melodramas that simultaneously pay tribute to a woman's sacrifice and protest against the social structures that made it necessary.

One of the group is Borzage's 1925 film, *The Lady*, recently preserved by the Library of Congress with other films from the estate of Norma Talmadge and previously unknown. Although the print lacks a reel showing the break-up of cabaret singer Talmadge's marriage to a British aristocrat thanks to the class prejudice of his father and the weakness of the son himself, enough is there to establish the film as an unconventional melodrama with an extraordinary performance by Talmadge herself.

After being rejected by her upper-class husband during a vacation in the south of France and discovering she is pregnant, Talmadge wanders into a Marseille dive. Reflecting Borzage's persistent avoidance of social stereotypes, her plight and grit eventually convert the denizens of this underworld into a supportive substitute family. The sequence of the baby's christening, in which the formidable female proprietor serves as godmother and a gaggle of sleepy, giggling whores act as witnesses, displays Borzage's knack for turning the depths into a humane counter-society.

In the *East Lynne* archetype, the erring aristocrat mother abandons her stolid middle-class marriage, giving in to the deceptions of an upper-class cad. She returns incognito (chastened, if not chaste) years later and serves as governess to her own children. Too late she learns the values of family life, and she suffers by giving up her children to her husband's second wife. In *The Lady*, Borzage not only reverses class allegiances, but refuses to let Talmadge return her child to his father's family. Her husband commits suicide soon after their divorce and his tyrannical father discovers his grandchild's existence and traces Talmadge to Marseille. Talmadge gives up her infant son, but not to his grandfather. Instead, she entrusts him to a childless English couple who have befriended her, exerting from them the promise never to let her know of her child's whereabouts for fear that the grandfather will be able to trace him.

The sacrificing mother in this melodrama stands firm against the power of patriarchy. The film certainly exploits the convention of suffering motherhood in sequences where Talmadge returns to London as a flower girl, hoping each little boy she meets might be her son. But here the mother's yearning is the consequence of a courageous act of revolt, rather than submission to a social system portrayed as fate. Borzage supplies a tentative reunion at the end of the film, as Talmadge, now the proprietor of a Marseille bar, discovers that the young British officer lying in her arms, unconscious from a bar-room fight, is her son. She doesn't convey her discovery to him, but we see once again the maternal embrace so central to Borzage's cinema.

In a storyline that recalls the opening of *The Lady, Marriage License?* (1926), the last of



BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS (2)

Borzage's maternal-melodrama trio, describes how the marriage of Alma Rubens (who starred in a Fox version of *East Lynne* in 1925) to a weak upper-class man is destroyed by class prejudice (embodied by a castrating mother). After a messy divorce trial, Rubens raises her son alone, refusing to let his father know of his existence. Years later, the nearly grown young man meets his father and they discover their relationship. When the son learns his father is a man of status, he also realises this could aid his projected military career. In an ironic final scene, father and son convince Rubens to remarry her former husband, giving up her lover and sense of honour and returning to a world of hypocrisy and bitterness. If Rubens' decision to sacrifice herself for her son's social advancement is the most conventional ending of the group, it is also the most bitter, with Rubens' performance conveying the instinct for revolt she has stifled for her son's sake.

Beyond the law

Undoubtedly the best of the three films is *Lazybones* (1925), discovered over a decade ago. This extraordinary film crossbreeds the maternal melodrama with the rural setting of the earlier Westerns, transforming the genre by displacing focus on to a male character, *Lazybones* (played by Western hero Buck Jones), the adoptive father of an abandoned baby who anticipates the nurturing male characters Farrell will play in the romances. Borzage also provides an opportunity for an extraordinary performance from Zazu Pitts, the star of *Greed* whom Stroheim pronounced the greatest American dramatic actress, but who eked out a Hollywood

career as a fluttery handed, comic old maid. In *Lazybones*, Pitts plays a mother who cannot convince her own puritanical mother that she was legally married to her baby's father before he died. *Lazybones* discovers Pitts abandoning her child (rather than face her mother) and agrees to care for it and conceal its identity until the mother is brought round. But the mother refuses ever to let her daughter acknowledge the child, so Jones raises the little girl in the face of constant gossip.

Borzage visualises the separation of mother and child in a scene where Pitts and her mother take a carriage ride past Jones' house some years later. In a point-of-view shot from the back of the passing carriage, we see Pitts' longing glance at her daughter playing in the yard, the camera and mother drawing ever further away. In the reverse angle, Pitts manages a slight wave as her wistful face strains to prolong the vision. Some years later, Pitts struggles to Jones' cabin to die in her adolescent daughter's presence, without revealing who she is. But this traditional finale of maternal melodramas occurs only half way through the film, and the remainder provides one of the most explicit presentations of the incest theme that Borzage was constantly drawn towards.

With the outbreak of the First World War, *Lazybones* joins the army and accidentally becomes a hero. Welcomed triumphantly home, he finds his charge now grown, and discovers a new attraction to her. Borzage conveys *Lazybones*' growing desire with an explicitness no less powerful for its gentleness, making us uncomfortably complicit and losing none of our sympathy for his characters. (Compare, for

Claustrophobic desire: Charles Farrell and Mary Duncan in Borzage's 'The River' (1928), a world filled by passion between an 'experienced' woman and 'innocent' young man

example, Sisif's hysterical discovery of his sexual attraction to his adopted daughter in Gance's *La Roue*, where Gance's excess distances both himself and the viewer from his protagonist's sexual conflict.) At the party given in his honour, Jones overhears his adopted daughter with her young lover and realises the insurmountable difficulties both the generational difference between them and the unspoken taboo would pose. He renounces his love and returns to his life as the town ne'er-do-well, spending most of his time fishing.

In this gentle masterpiece, Borzage tells a tale of universally unfulfilled desire. Pitts never experiences the love of her daughter, Jones' courtship of Pitts' sister is torpedoed by the gossip caused by his taking in the child, and years later he realises that his desire for the girl is folly. Like Sherwood Anderson, Borzage manages a vision of small-town American life based on the repression of desire, yet still manages to be sympathetic towards his characters. However, Borzage would continue to search for a form of romance that would blend the nurturing maternal caring of the melodramas with real sexual passion. The four romances he filmed at Fox achieve this, and represent one of the strongest series of auteur films in American silent cinema. *Seventh Heaven*, *Street Angel*, *Lucky Star* and *The River* stand not only as masterpieces of an old-fashioned cinema of sentiment, but as essays in mad love, aware that desire at its most intense touches upon perversity, and creates its own world beyond the laws made by men.

GREEN PAPER BLUES

The government's paper on the BBC has been welcomed. Here, two writers from right and left beg to differ

CENTO VELJANOVSKI

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The publication of the government Green Paper *The Future of the BBC* marks yet another phase in the disaster that passes for broadcasting policy in the UK. Instead of considering the whole industry, the approach has been to focus on sectors, with the result that the sum of the whole is irrational, piecemeal and contradictory. Each part blocks off future options which would provide a more rational framework for a rapidly changing industry.

For example, the 1990 Broadcasting Act limits the range of options that can be considered for the BBC. In short, it rules out entirely the possibility of the BBC gaining revenue from advertising. This is not because advertising would debauch the BBC's programmes, but because to do so would bankrupt many ITV companies. The Broadcasting Act led to ITV franchises being sold to the highest cash bid. This was advocated in 1986 by the Peacock Report as a way of simultaneously mopping up ITV's excessive profits and making it more efficient. The calculation underpinning the cash bids assumed no advertising on the BBC. Therefore if the BBC were suddenly to dump a significant amount of advertising airtime on to the market, advertising rates would plummet, followed by ITV company finances.

For the same reason it is not possible to undertake major structural reforms of the terrestrial broadcasting system. Some time ago I proposed that competitive pressure in commercial television could be increased (and by implication obviate the need for cash auctions) while preserving the present commitment to public-service broadcasting at much lower cost by a very simple reorganisation. All that would be needed is to privatise BBC1, while retaining BBC2 and Channel 4 as public-service channels funded by the licence fee. These two channels could be run by a slimmed-down BBC operating on the Channel 4 publisher-contractor model,

that is, contracting out the production of all programmes to independent producers. The proposal would also have the effect of redefining the BBC's programme remit – it would take over C4's remit to be innovative, experimental and complementary to the commercial sector. For all the elegant simplicity of this proposal, its implementation today would wreak havoc with ITV's finances, already savaged by the unexpected depth of the recession.

In my view, the Green Paper misses the real issue. It is not the future of the BBC which is of major concern, but the future of public-service broadcasting. It is important to bear in mind that the BBC does not have a monopoly on public-service broadcasting, only on the licence fee. ITV and Channel 4 provide a substantial quantity of public-service programmes funded by advertising revenue, and do so in a more explicit and regulated manner. In some areas, the commercial provision of public-service programming is greater than that offered by the BBC, for example in regional programmes.

Yet we have learnt in the last year that the BBC is not content with its monopoly on the licence fee. It wants a share of the advertising-revenue cake through its participation in the new satellite channel, UK Gold. This development undermines the BBC's claim that it should have exclusive access to the licence fee and that this exclusivity is a central tenet of public-service broadcasting. One does not have to be a Jesuit scholar to appreciate the inherent contradiction the BBC has managed to manufacture, which gives it access to all sources of revenue, while the commercial sector must fund its public-service obligations itself.

The above should make it clear why the idea of a public-service broadcasting council is so appealing, even though it has been dismissed rudely and cavalierly by ex-minister David Mellor and broadcasting crony Sir Paul Fox. The council would dispense licence-fee revenue for public-service programmes to all broadcasters, on the basis of competitive tenders for specific programmes or programme genres. When the idea was mooted in the Peacock Report on

the financing of the BBC, the council was to be established when most of the country had access to cable and satellite television, and the role of the BBC had diminished. But I think there are grounds to accelerate the introduction of the council, to provide a competitive spur to the BBC and to provide an additional incentive to other broadcasters to mix their commercial fare with public-service programmes. Indeed, we already have a prototype in the form of the Gaelic Television Fund, created by the Broadcasting Act to fund Gaelic-language programmes on Scottish television, whether they be on C4, the BBC or ITV. The fund paves the way for such a council and has established that one can co-exist within the present structure of British broadcasting.

Finally, the management and regulation of the BBC need to be streamlined. The present management is confused, and lacks real vision and confidence. Moreover, the board of governors is a relic of a long-past corporatist age. I propose that the BBC be run by a board consisting of management and non-executive directors, and accountable to an independent external regulatory body. The most straightforward solution is to have the Independent Television Commission regulate both BBC and ITV. But I would go much further by creating an Office of Communications (OFC) which would take over the responsibilities of the ITC, the Radio Authority, the Office of Telecommunications, the Broadcasting Standards Council and the Broadcasting Complaints Commission. Finally, I would shorten the life of the Charter and BBC licence to two or three years, reviewed by the OFC, which would also have the responsibility to set the annual licence fee.

The above partial and preliminary response to the Green Paper implies a smaller, more focused BBC – a centre of excellence which does not compete with the commercial sector but complements it, efficiently managed without political and officious intermeddling, accountable to an external and independent regulator which has responsibility for all media.

PETER GOODWIN

Freelance journalist who has written widely on the broadcasting industry

It is, everyone agrees, the greenest of green papers. After the debacle of the ITV franchise auction, the government pitch on the BBC is 'we've set out all the options and we're open to the arguments'. Good. But don't cheer yet. The range of options we are being offered is still very much confined within the limits set by Thatcherite broadcasting policy. And some very attractive shades of green have been ruled outside the politically visible spectrum.

We should challenge the ruling. And the first and most important challenge should be on the supposed technological underpinning to the whole 'debate'. "The original justification for public service broadcasting", says the Green Paper, not entirely accurately, was "that a small number of services should be used for the benefit of the public". But that basic spectrum scarcity no longer exists: "More services and greater choice have been made possible by developments in technology".

True. But this tells us nothing about how these new technological developments might be used. Is it for public service or for profit? This greenest of green papers simply assumes the answer – for profit. It makes a formal gesture to the possibility of using some of the new developments to expand public service. The BBC "might need more radio or television services to meet minority or specialist needs", it says. It even gives hypothetical examples: "a service entirely for educational or training programmes for European issues".

But the options are raised only to be firmly blocked off. Turn to the finance section of the Green Paper and the first question posed is "Should the BBC reduce its expenditure by cutting the range or quality of its programming and services?" Providing the funds to expand the range and quality of services, as the technology allows, is not even an option to be canvassed. The net result is that the only way the

BBC is allowed to get into new channels is when it can use them to make a fast buck on the side to bolster its declining public income.

Sadly, even the critics of government broadcasting policy seem to have bought this Tory technological determinism that more channels inevitably means a contraction in public-service broadcasting – the only question being, by how much? They should not. New channels offer numerous opportunities for more public service: a dedicated children's service with an eye to developing minds; experimental entertainment and arts channels; more conventional adult-education channels; and even – why not? – free repeats channels uncluttered by advertising. The list should be endless.

Accepting the possibility of expanding public-service broadcasting would also bring an extra cutting edge to critics of government policy in one of the apparently thorniest areas in the current debate, namely, cultural ghetto versus popular programming. It is a false dilemma dictated by the government's terms of debate. Break the ever-tightening stranglehold on public provision for broadcasting, and the BBC could give us both *Neighbours* and a lot more of the genuinely higher ground. Where would the extra money come from? It depends how far you want to go. Index the licence fee to earnings rather than to less than inflation and use the extra money from the ITV bids, if you are timid. Personally I would pay for the lot out of direct taxation and screw the rich.

Two other yawning gaps in the Green Paper's spectrum of possibility should also be noted – control and content. The Green Paper's euphemism for control of broadcasting is "accountability". By that, it means more control by accountants and perhaps a little tinkering with the governors. Any degree of democratic control by those who make the programmes is ruled out of the debate. But a BBC controlled by those who work for it would be a good deal more responsive to the viewers than anything the Green Paper can envisage.

Content does not even merit a euphemism in the new Tory open mind. Perhaps the only

thing the Green Paper says about it – again, not entirely accurately – is, "Traditionally, Governments have not intervened in decisions about programmes nor in the day-to-day management of the BBC". End of story. Any serious observer should be less complacent. Critics once used to complain of the BBC's paternalistic crafting of an establishment consensus. With the corporation laying renewed emphasis on news and current affairs and representation of 'the national culture', we would be wise to complain again. The BBC's current mission to explain already looks very like the world according to Peter Jay (except when he mildly criticises the Tories before an election).

It looks set to turn out even more stilted. Arguments from the left about the ideological content of the BBC's output, its lack of real pluralism and its insistence on only presenting anti-establishment views in a suitably mediated manner, are more necessary now than ever.

More public-service broadcasting, workers' control at Television Centre and ideological contestation of BBCspeak – it's all so 70s, I can hear you say, nothing to do with the reality of the 90s. But there are two reasons why you are wrong. First, no one ever got anywhere in a political argument by bowing to his or her opponent's ground rules. And second, all the evidence is that despite the government's carefully crafted openness about the future of the BBC, a deep unease remains about the direction in which it, together with the BBC management, is taking the corporation. Channel 4's Michael Grade, National Theatre director Richard Eyre, and David Attenborough have all voiced deep reservations about the road the BBC is already travelling under the banner of 'Producer Choice'.

If broadcasting's liberal establishment can be so critical, those of us to the left of it should be arguing even harder. There is much dissatisfaction to be built on. In the short term, the argument might indeed turn out to be a damage-limitation exercise. But even on that battlefield, it is worth raising the ideological stakes.

From Martin Scorsese's 'Mean Streets' to Abel Ferrara's 'Bad Lieutenant', Harvey Keitel shows madness in his Method.

By David Thompson

HARVEY KEITEL STAYING POWER

● It appears now to have been both a help and a hindrance to Harvey Keitel that he should first have been widely seen, finger poised over the flame of hellfire, as Charlie in Martin Scorsese's infernally charged rock opera, *Mean Streets*. It was no simple scenario of a star is born, since he was pitted against the dangerous energy of Robert De Niro in the more overtly volatile role of Johnny Boy. In fact, Keitel's performance is as detailed and febrile as any in the film, with his sharp-suited appeal for respectability among the Little Italy mobsters wrestling with an internal desperation to be liked by his street buddies. If Charlie and Johnny's backroom banter about gambling debts is, as Scorsese has said, the hub of the film, then Keitel was playing the most complex straight man in the history of comedy.

It has been a measure of Keitel's success since then that he rarely fails to live on screen as someone who just is. He has proved to be one of the most exciting vindications of the Method school, an actor who slips into his role's clothes, environment and attitude without any distractions of actorish business. Keitel's merging with his chosen characters has placed him neither as an identifiable star (in the way that Cary Grant always was, simply and subtly, Cary Grant), nor as a chameleon who blends into the frame. He is not the obvious stuff of stardom physically, either; a well-developed body of average stature is topped by an almost brutal, tightly packed face that can switch from fierce aggression to sunny warmth in the blink of an eye.

Perhaps it's not so surprising, therefore, that Keitel has frequently been cast on one or other side of the law: good cops (*Thelma & Louise*) and twisted cops (*Bad Lieutenant*); smart criminals (*Bugsy*) and weak hoods (*Reservoir Dogs*). Keitel clearly takes pride in bringing out the humanity of street scum and the scuzzy side of ordinary folk. If that infamous range comes from a daunting seriousness in his craft, so be it. Not every director might relish his dogged pursuit of motivations and character backgrounds. But when the chemistry works – as it has with Scorsese, above all – then the rewards vibrate on the screen.

Keitel has been willing to take extraordinary

risks in subject – think of the romantic aggression of his piano-playing debt collector in James Toback's *Fingers*, surely now due for revival – and in his choice of collaborators. The list of first-time directors is impressive: Paul Schrader, Alan Rudolph, Ridley Scott, and most recently, Quentin Tarantino with *Reservoir Dogs*. Furthermore, he has willingly shifted between mainstream Hollywood fare and numerous European productions (particularly in Italy). He has also supported such disparate independently-minded auteurs as Abel Ferrara with *Bad Lieutenant* and Jane Campion with the forthcoming *The Piano Lesson*.

Keitel was born in Brooklyn in 1947 to parents who ran a refreshment stand on Brighton Beach. After a three-year spell in the Marines, he attended both New York University and the Actors Studio, where he studied with Stella Adler, Frank Corsaro and Lee Strasberg. After making his stage debut in Summer Stock in Edward Albee's *The American Dream*, followed by off-Broadway productions, he answered an ad and became the lead character in Martin Scorsese's first feature, *Who's That Knocking at My Door?* He appeared on Broadway in 1975 as Happy Loman opposite George C. Scott in Scott's production of *Death of a Salesman*, and in the mid-80s with William Hurt in David Rabe's *Hurly Burly*, directed by Mike Nichols. But the theatre has taken a back seat to his intensive film work, for Keitel – to his own disbelief – has already notched up some fifty roles in cinema and television films.

When I met Keitel in November, he was in London acting in *The Young Americans*, a Working Title production in which he portrays a US drugs investigator on special assignment. Typically, it's another film by a first-time director, Danny Cannon, whose self-penned script was sufficient to attract Keitel. For his next film, he plans to be reunited with Amos Poe in *Snake Eyes*, co-starring Madonna. Keitel gives few interviews, though he clearly felt a special obligation to promote the wild talent of Tarantino, as well as the bleak vision of *Bad Lieutenant*. The latter may be an indigestible example of what *Variety* might call a "grunge-fest", but there's no denying Keitel's own terrifying presence. Few actors would have dared deliver such naked self-abuse. But then few are as fearless as Keitel.

David Thompson: What inspired you to become an actor?

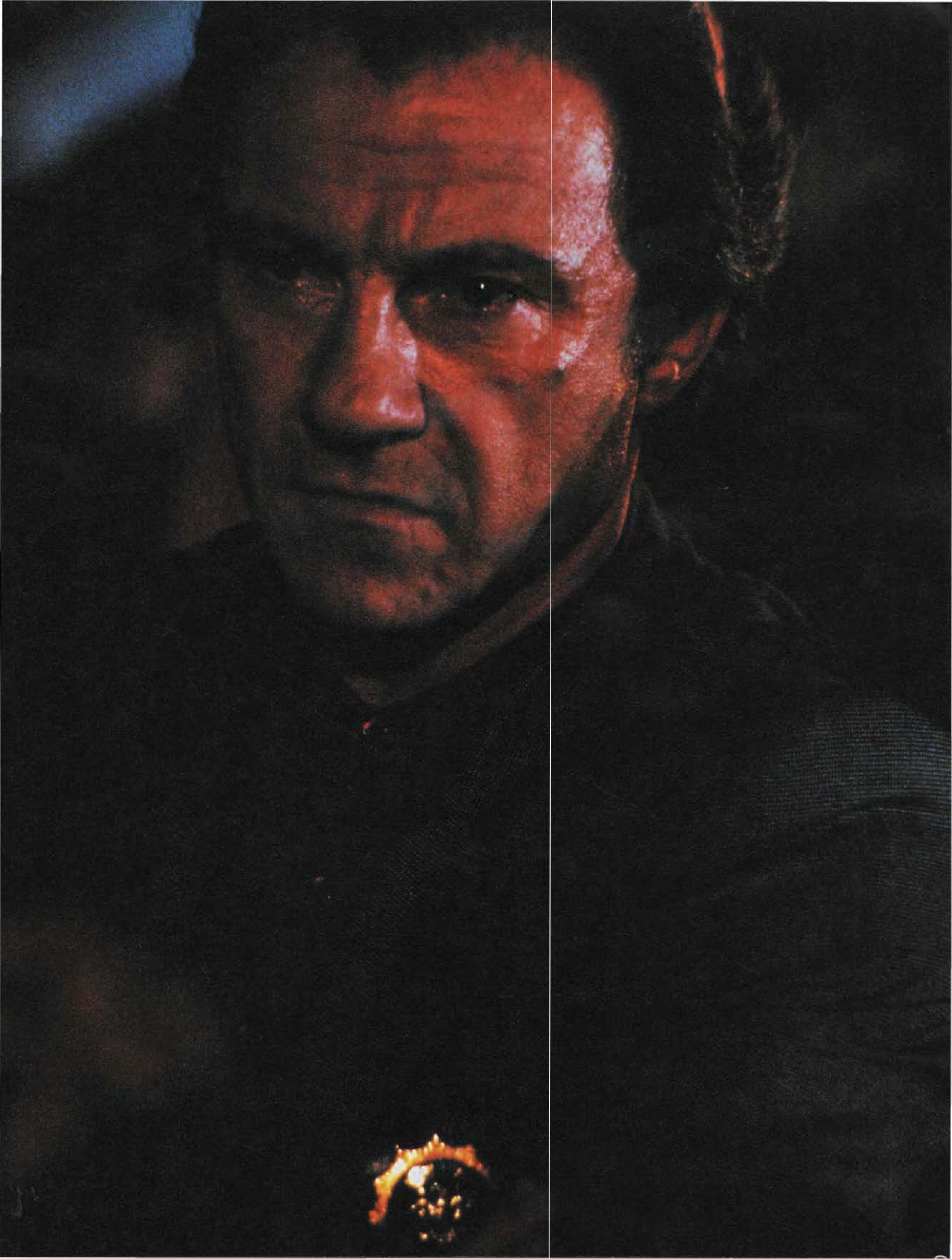
Harvey Keitel: I was a teenager when people like James Dean and Marlon Brando began their careers. As growing up has its difficulties, we look for heroes to help us through that shadowy forest. The work these people did, Kazan and Cassavetes too, represented a struggle to cope with the difficulty of being that stimulated and gave hope to me and my friends.

How significant were the three years you spent in the Marines?

Myself and two of my best friends at that time, we were three young men in search of an identity, in search of our heroes, trying to become our own heroes. There's that great line in Dickens' *David Copperfield*: "Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether ►



Alter egos: Harvey Keitel as the good cop of Ridley Scott's 'Thelma & Louise', above, and the corrupt, drug-taking cop of Abel Ferrara's bleak 'Bad Lieutenant', opposite



◀ that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show". I had my introduction to mythology in the Marines. The first instruction I had was in night-combat class – hundreds of us were huddled together in boot camp on Paris Island, and this Marine instructor said to us: "You're scared of the darkness because you're scared of what you don't know. I'm going to teach you to know the darkness". A profound statement.

How did this experience translate itself into your work at the Actors Studio?

The craft is a way to penetrate emotions, and the only way to be fearless is to go through fear. *So it's more than the fear of standing up in front of people?*

Yes. I'm talking about fear in terms of existing, of having to wake up in the morning and saying, what do I do now?

How has that affected the many roles you've played?

Stella Adler, who's a great teacher, remarked that the analysis of the text is the education of the actor. I try to engage only in projects through which I will deepen my awareness, and for the most part I've been lucky: I've only had to do a few commercial films to make some money from time to time, and mostly I've worked with profound people.

Your first film, 'Who's That Knocking at My Door?', was a long time in the making, as it grew from a student film into a feature...

Only over five years!

... which must have been a strange initiation?

I didn't know any other way. I was working off-Broadway at the same time at the Café La MaMa. Had I known different, I would have complained. I think it was fate that Marty and I met up at the beginning of our careers. I vividly recall sitting down together to watch a scene that had been cut. It was inside the church, when the title song is played, and I was aware of being in the midst of some extraordinary experience... I was deeply stirred by a whole cacophony of emotions, and I felt I was in the right place.

In that film and in 'Mean Streets', was it a special problem for you to be playing the part of an Italian American, given your own background?

I grew up in Brooklyn and went to school in Coney Island, so my friends were everything: Jewish, Catholic, Irish, a real melting pot. It didn't matter that I was raised Jewish and that Marty was raised Catholic, our place was beyond local religion.

I understand Scorsese had to fight to have you play the role of a redneck cowboy in 'Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore'.

I was supposed to get \$10,000 for the role – I was beside myself! But then the studio didn't want me, so they said to Marty that if he wanted me, I'd only get \$3,000. It was my first job after *Mean Streets*, and nobody else would hire me. I had done a couple of television shows – I was a guest on the first *Kojak* and then I did an *FBI* episode – and they wanted me to do more in Hollywood. But I went back to New York and the Actors Studio because I wasn't being fulfilled. It was almost a year later that Marty offered me *Alice*.

Do you regret not doing more stage work?

I haven't done a play now for five years, but I'm

It didn't matter that I was raised Jewish and that Marty was raised Catholic, our place was beyond local religion

looking to do another. It's difficult to get a movie career going unless you're one of the top bankable actors, in which case you don't have much say in your career. I want to do more theatre, though I don't like doing eight shows a week – I think it's a mechanism created by theatre owners to make more money. The one day off is only a day to recuperate, and if it weren't for the unions, you'd probably have to do nine or ten performances a week.

I believe you played a large part in developing the role of the pimp in 'Taxi Driver'.

Marty handed me the script and said, "What part do you want to play?" I read it and said I'd like to play the pimp. He thought I'd want the campaign worker – the pimp only had about five lines – but I was still living in an area where pimps worked, so I had them in my consciousness every day. He was described as an Italian guy standing in a doorway, and I just took it from there. I created the character with a guy who taught me about the pimp's life – we worked together for a couple of weeks doing improvisations, and then presented it to Marty. Then Marty wanted me in another scene, so I had the idea of me and Jodie dancing to a song I wrote. It showed that he genuinely cares for this girl and will do anything for her, an extraordinary relationship I'm not sure I comprehend even today.

James Toback's 'Fingers' was the first film in which you were at the centre. How much did you contribute to that character?

The script was entirely written, hardly anything was improvised. Jimmy's a friend of mine, and we worked together very closely to understand who the character is, especially his relationship with his mother and father. I couldn't play the piano, so I studied a lot, I practised a lot, I watched tapes of Glenn Gould, who was a phenomenon. Preparation is very hard to talk about, because it involves the actor's craft, that is, analysis of the text, improvisation and sensory work, which is part of the tool we use in the Method. If it works for you, you use it, if it doesn't, you don't.

The character in 'Fingers' is an extraordinary romantic, isn't he?

If I were to comment on that, then I would be defining the character, and I think watching the film defines it better than me speaking about it. But of course the best characters are those who are impassioned – just look at Shakespeare or Ibsen.

You've demonstrated numerous times that you're willing and eager to work with first-time directors.

My agent at one time also represented Ridley Scott, and he pleaded with me to see his commercials reel because he wanted me for *The Duellists*. I said, "I'm not interested in working with a commercials director", but he bothered me so much that in the end I looked at them,

and I realised each one was like a little, well-made film. I learned not to be so quick to judge people, that I owed it to them to sit down with them, so I've never made that mistake again. *How was working with Ridley Scott different from American directors?*

Ridley was always really open, with a great sense of humour. I remember we were shooting a scene inside the war room after Napoleon's defeat, and I was playing a general planning our strategy with his colonels. In walks Edward Fox, and in the rehearsal he sits on my desk. I took Ridley aside and said, "He shouldn't sit on my desk, because he's a colonel and I'm a general". He went over to Edward for a private word, and then came back and said, "Well, Harvey, in those days they did that". I said, "How do you know, were you there? I was in the military, and I'm telling you it's not done". Ridley said, "I feel we should do it, Edward needs it", so I said, "OK, go ahead". So action is called, Edward walks in, he says "Sir!", I turn around, he sits on my desk and I said, "Get your arse off of my desk!" And Edward, like the wonderful actor he is, stood up.

You made a lot of films outside Hollywood in the 80s.

Why was that?

I simply couldn't get any work in Hollywood, for the most part. But it turned out a blessing, because I worked with some great people. For example, Bertrand Tavernier is a man for all seasons; the space he occupies is an environment I knew well, he is a profound man, who is involved in witnessing his own conflicts.

'Deathwatch' was made in English. But what about films like 'That Night in Varennes', where all the cast were different nationalities?

Marcello Mastroianni speaks English, Jean-Louis Barrault only spoke French. But the weight of the project and the people involved overcome any technical problems. I came to Rome to meet Ettore Scola, and he asked if I wanted an interpreter because he didn't speak English at all well then. I said no, no interpreter, so we sat stumbling through three evenings without being able to understand each other. But on another level, we were in the same place, especially as he had hired me to play Thomas Paine.

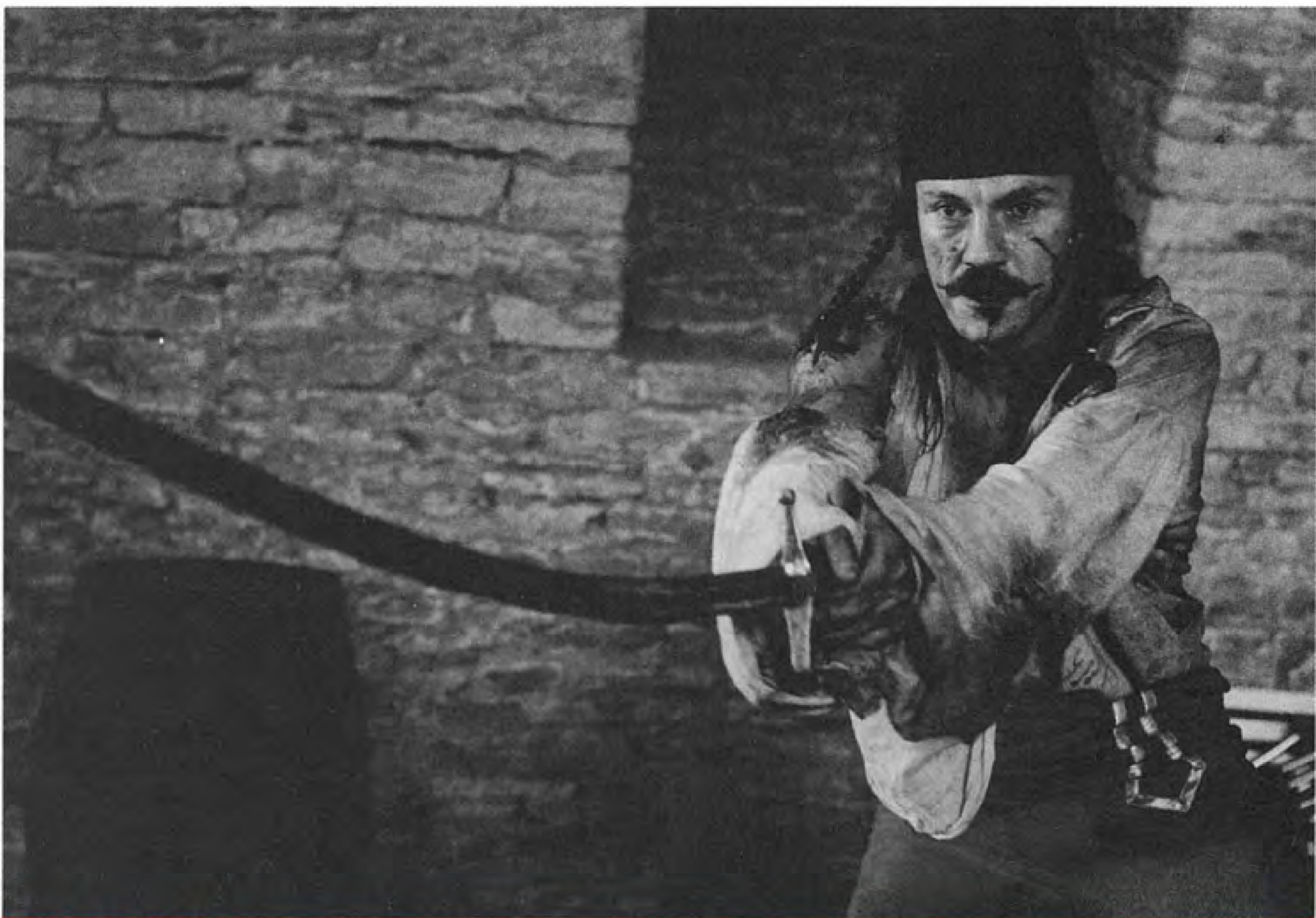
Though you say you're not "bankable", you have nevertheless been able to use your name to help get films made.

Yes, that has happened now, but look at the size of the budgets! I'm not looking a gift horse in the mouth, and I'm very proud of films like *Reservoir Dogs* and *Bad Lieutenant*. But their budgets were just over \$1,000,000, which shows you how much I seem to be worth in Hollywood's eyes.

How did you become producer on 'Reservoir Dogs'?

I read the script, and was so impressed I called the producer, Lawrence Bender, and said I wanted to do it. Quentin wanted me to play Mr White, and after three months I was able to make up my mind to take that part. I financed – at no great cost – their trip to New York, because I wanted them to have the benefit of seeing New York actors. After that auditioning process, they generously felt I deserved to be credited as a co-producer.

Watching your performance in 'Reservoir Dogs', I was



The Duellists (1977)

Filmography

Harvey Keitel

Born New York 1947

Films

Who's That Knocking at My Door?

D: Martin Scorsese (1969)

Mean Streets

D: Martin Scorsese (1973)

Alice Doesn't Live Here Anymore

D: Martin Scorsese (1974)

That's the Way of the World

D: Sig Shore (1975)

Buffalo Bill and the Indians

D: Robert Altman (1976)

Welcome to L.A.

D: Alan Rudolph (1976)

Mother, Jugs & Speed

D: Peter Yates (1976)

Taxi Driver

D: Martin Scorsese (1976)

Fingers

D: James Toback (1977)

The Duellists

D: Ridley Scott (1977)

Blue Collar

D: Paul Schrader (1978)

Saturn 3

D: Stanley Donen (1980)

Bad Timing

D: Nicolas Roeg (1980)

Deathwatch (Mort en direct)

D: Bertrand Tavernier (1980)

The Border

D: Tony Richardson (1981)

That Night in Varennes (La Nuit de Varennes)

D: Ettore Scola (1982)

Exposed

D: James Toback (1983)

Order of Death

D: Roberto Faenza (1983)

A Stone in the Mouth (Une pierre dans la bouche)

D: Jean-Louis Leconte (1983)

Falling in Love

D: Ulu Grosbard (1984)

Dream One

D: Arnaud Ségnac (1984)

Eagle's Wing

D: Anthony Harvey (1984)

El caballero del dragon

D: Fernando Colomo (1985)

The Naples Connection (Un complicato intrigo di donne, vicoli e delitti)

D: Lina Wertmüller (1985)

The Men's Club

D: Peter Medak (1986)

Off Beat

D: Michael Dinner (1986)

Wise Guys

D: Brian De Palma (1986)

The American

D: Giovanni Soldati (1986)

Blindside

D: Paul Lynch (1987)

The Pick-up Artist

D: James Toback (1987)

The Inquiry (L'inchiesta)

D: Damiano Damiani (1987)

The Last Temptation of Christ

D: Martin Scorsese (1988)

Dear Gorbachev (Caro Gorbaciov)

D: Carlo Lizzani (1988)

The January Man

D: Pat O'Connor (1989)

Drums of Fire (Tambores de fuego/

La Bataille des trois rois)

D: Souhel Ben Barka (1989)

The Two Jakes

D: Jack Nicholson (1990)

Two Evil Eyes (Due occhi diabolici)

D: Dario Argento/George A. Romero (1990)

The Great Hunter (Il grande cacciatore)

D: Augusto Camino (1990)

Thelma & Louise

D: Ridley Scott (1991)

Bugsy

D: Barry Levinson (1991)

Mortal Thoughts

D: Alan Rudolph (1991)

Reservoir Dogs

D: Quentin Tarantino (1992)

Sister Act

D: Emile Ardolino (1992)

Bad Lieutenant

D: Abel Ferrara (1992)

The Specialist

D: John Badham (1992)

The Piano Lesson

D: Jane Campion (1993)

Television

The Virginia Hill Story

(TV movie) D: Joel Schumacher (1974)

Amazing Stories – Vanessa in

the Garden (TV episode)

D: Clint Eastwood (1985)

Baciami strega

(TV episode) D: Duccio Tessari (1986)

Down Where the Buffalo Go

(BBC TV) GB dir: Ian Knox (1988)



Mean Streets (1973)

very struck by your business with the lighter, clicking your fingers in that obsessive way...

Tim Roth's son does a great imitation of me doing that.

I wondered how important that gesture was to you in forming the character, and how it came about?

The lighter wouldn't light. These things just occur. Actors who know their craft understand this, they expect it because when you create a living organism you can't dictate how it's going to behave, so there will always be surprises. Then again, every actor has his own way. It could be a physicality, one time it might be a smell, another time it could be a fart.

Was the relationship that evolves between your character, Mr White, and that of Tim Roth, Mr Orange, in the original script?

What you see there was in the text, nothing was added. I felt Quentin was writing about mythological themes, universal themes of betrayal and redemption, and Mr White needed to be a hero to the younger man. And Mr Orange, who represents the law, has to seek redemption for carrying out what the law demands of him.

You often seem to be playing parts on one side or other of the law. When you've played cops, I believe you've done a great deal of research into their work.

I worked closely with Larry Mullane on *Mortal Thoughts*, and on *Bad Lieutenant* I hung around with Dennis O'Sullivan and his detectives. Policemen are people I have a great deal of respect for, and once you've been with them on their rounds, your admiration for their work and courage can only be deepened. Until you touch what they have to touch, i.e. a dead body, you can't know what they go through.

Did they know the film was about a cop steeped in corruption with an appalling drug habit?

No, in that I told them the story, but there's no way they could know it completely until they see the film. But it's not a film about the police department, or even about a policeman. For me, it's about a man who is a father, and he's losing his soul and becomes aware of it and tries to do some good. What I feel is that we have to write our own Bible, and not just rely on the experiences of our ancestors. I feel that's true of *The Last Temptation of Christ*, too. Unless we deal with our own inner conflicts, then we will leave that legacy to our children to cope with because we failed. I am aware that Abel Ferrara is the father of two adopted Indian children, and I am a father of two children, so I feel a responsibility to show the difficulty of doing what's right, of getting out of hell.

Even if that means remorselessly showing yourself in character as wrecked by drugs, and possibly alienating the audience?

I was very proud when someone said it was the best anti-drugs film they had ever seen, because there was no moralising in it. I answered to the call in my brain. With Abel and Zoë Lund I made a story, and I hope it will do some good. We made the film that way, even though we knew it would be an NC-17, that it wouldn't wind up making any money. I believe it's a religious film, because hell is here now and so is the opportunity to know heaven.

'Reservoir Dogs' opens on 8 January and 'Bad Lieutenant' on 19 February

RIDING WITH AMBULANCES TELEVISION AND ITS USES

Reality programmes such as '999' may be new to Britain, but they are central to US TV. Andrew Goodwin on the world of camcorders, violence, exploitation – and social responsibility

● Television in America has routinely been disparaged and subjected to moral panics about its effects and impact. Written off as the 'boob tube', the 'Great Mother' (the metaphors are significantly gendered), as "a vast wasteland" (by Newton Minow, Federal Communications Commission chief, in 1961) and, more recently, as "a toaster with pictures" (by Mark Fowler, Ronald Reagan's FCC chairman), television is rarely taken seriously by cultural commentators. But judged even by these lowered expectations, the tabloid television shows and 'real-life' programming that first hit our screens in the mid-80s represent a new low, according to the medium's critics.

In the new formats of shows like *Cops*, *America's Most Wanted* and *Rescue 911*, 'factual' output is subjected to all the razzamatazz of a prime-time game show. Meanwhile, amateur video is increasingly prominent (CNN recruits would-be newsgatherers or so-called "CNN Newshounds"), from the videotaped beating of Rodney King to the domestic pratfalls of *America's Funniest Home Videos*. This material is increasingly packaged like a commercial or an MTV video clip, with all notions of 'keeping faith with the viewer' (is it 'fact' or 'fiction'?) subsumed under the need to generate excitement. Documentary and camcorder images are electronically manipulated and spiced up with music and dramatic and/or comic voiceover. Reporters are chromakeyed into dramatic

reconstructions. And tabloid news values increasingly cross over into television's factual output, through sensationalised 'human-interest' shows like *Hard Copy*, *A Current Affair* and *Inside Edition*.

'Reality programming' is, of course, one of television's least expensive forms, and this has led some to argue that it is, in both senses, its cheapest. Many of these criticisms are well placed. But there is also much more going on in the new 'reality' shows: a move towards a utilitarian view of television, and an undermining of the ideology of naturalism.

Post-naturalism

Until a few years ago, you might confidently have asserted that the dominant ideology in television in Britain and the US was naturalism – a commitment to an impartial, objective portrayal of the world via the veracity of the camera. And as Richard Collins points out in an essay about the work of Roger Graef (in his book *Television: Policy and Culture*), the ideology of the neutral camera gells perfectly with the philosophy of 'balance'. The radicals who critiqued this view demanded an actively engaged television – the media as a form of social advocacy. Instead, what we have (in the US at least) is a break with objectivity that promotes a point of view, but one which is pro-television, pro-law and order and committed to a populist agenda of technological determinism that sees the

spread of the camcorder as a sign of a vibrant, participatory democracy.

Many of these shows began in the late 80s. And yet the new post-naturalist television shows that are now coming out in the wake of *Cops*, *America's Funniest Home Videos* and *America's Most Wanted* also reveal a contradictory political impulse, if only because they take the challenge to dominant notions of the camera-observer even further.

After the success of three special episodes last season, *I Witness Video* started its first run as a regular NBC series. Like *Rescue 911* (imitated by the BBC as 999), *I Witness Video* presents television and video as unmitigated blessings for humankind. Written off as "snuff video" by *TV Guide*, this new show clearly sees itself as the socially redeeming version of *America's Funniest Home Videos*: "Most of us use our camcorders to record parties, vacations, the happy times", says host Patrick VanHorn. "But video is also used for much greater purposes. To help us see things in ways we never thought possible. To influence our behaviour, alter our opinions and even change our lives. Tonight, video that has made a difference". When one of these instances is the use of a micro-cam in the helmet of a football player to give us a skull's-eye view of the game, that rhetoric sounds comic. And when a camera is taken aboard a helicopter on a last-minute search for a kidney-transplant patient on vacation in the desert,



the ambulance-chasing factor does bring the snuff-video accusation to the fore.

Rescue 911, on the other hand, never chases ambulances, because it rides with them. Where *I Witness Video* gives us live recordings of real events, *Rescue 911* engages in harrowing reconstructions of real-life accidents and dramas featuring many of the original participants. The show's fourth season opener is an extended sixty-minute boast which begins unashamedly with the slogan: "100 lives saved". "A television programme's success can be measured in many different ways – ratings, awards, reviews. For us, the important measure has been in lives", says host William Shatner. In all his years as *Star Trek*'s Captain James T. Kirk, Shatner has hardly uttered more preposterous words. But if you believe that popular culture cannot be understood unless you go beyond cynicism, then it is worth considering this statement not only from the point of view of NBC (as a lie) but also from the perspective of the audience (as a promise). We might not believe Captain Kirk (cynicism is necessary, albeit not sufficient), but he has a point. What is the critic, trained in the art of analysing 'texts', to do when television moves so swiftly from reflection to action?

Tabloid television

When television's appeal shifts so dramatically from truth to use, it places itself centrally as the new authority figure in a frightened, atom-

ised society. "I realised at that point that I was talking to a child and I realised that he was there by himself. I knew that he had not called his mom at work, he had not called his grandparents. He had immediately called 911, and that was crucial". The point being made here, by a fire dispatcher dealing with a 911 call, is that the young boy called that number because he had seen the television show. *Rescue 911* is interested in effects, not in myth; although that leaves plenty of room to create the myth of its own effects. Some of which are truly bizarre: a woman unknowingly suffering from carbon-monoxide poisoning generated by a faulty gas heater is taken to hospital by her husband. *Rescue 911* comes on the television in the emergency room, featuring a story about a woman who has exactly the same symptoms, as a consequence of inhaling fumes from a gas heater in the home. The couple diagnose the problem on the basis of what they have just seen, and rush home to rescue their children from the brink of death.

"For most of us our homes seem so safe, we could never imagine them posing a threat to our lives", Shatner tells us. Of course, the media critic wants to take this as a metaphor. In paranoid, post-imperial America, the family has retreated to the home, where it nests comfortably in front of the television set... only to find that here, too, there are dark threats in every nook and cranny. When the big bad world

becomes a place where Americans fear to tread, the home, too, becomes a haven of insecurity. If Saddam doesn't gas you, your cooker will. But, as so often with metaphors, what does this explain? If *Rescue 911* is actually saving lives, and if, as a text, it offers a life-affirming promise that television will make the world a safer place, then why reduce social use to an allegorical figure?

Rescue 911 is thus a benign version of *America's Most Wanted*, the show that re-enacts crimes in order to set the general public on the heels of real-life felons. Similarly, the CBS series *Top Cops* (now in its third season) focuses not on hunting down bad guys (as in Fox's *Cops*) but on dramatising the personal stories of individual police officers. When an unlikely hero by the name of Dick Tracy foils a suicide bid by a young woman who plans to throw herself from a bridge on to the freeway, the dramatisation looks like standard stuff. But when the real cop (yes, his name is Dick Tracy) is reunited years later with the woman, who thanks him for saving her, the emotional pull is undeniable. How can you not choke up as the young woman comes on all emotional and Dick stands there looking all sheepish?

Each of these programmes (*I Witness Video*, *Rescue 911*, *Top Cops*) develops the earlier model of tabloid television, circa 1988-89, by placing the viewer even more firmly on the side of, and often physically in the position of, law- ►

◀ enforcement officers and fire and rescue workers. The camera sits there with the 911 operators and witnesses their anguish as a child almost dies from a drowning accident. It takes us through the shooting of a cop from the point of view of the police officer herself, reconstructing the ghastly moment when the villain turns the gun on me – I mean, her.

Of course, from the point of view of the television industry, this is a brilliant coup. Even as they garner respectable ratings shares from the trashiest and most manipulative televisual forms yet invented, the networks can also lay claim to a sense of social responsibility. These programmes are among the most violent on television, and yet they are also television's answer to the critics who claim the medium exploits the lowest common denominator for anti-social ends.

But what's in it for the audience? William Shatner's promise (message: "we care") might echo the empty gestures of President Bush in some respects, but it also answers a need. Two needs, actually. First, there is the craving to be released from the guilty burdens of voyeurism. Like the good Samaritans who stop their cars and pull off the freeway to save the life of a

People sell images of their children being injured in order to gain fame and riches on a show where the top prize is \$100,000

young girl trapped under her overturned vehicle, we want to be involved. Shows like *Rescue 911* and *America's Most Wanted* rescue us from the epistemology of the couch potato (naturalism). We don't want to sit there any longer, ogling all those wars and famines with nothing to be done. Americans are constructed as a people who adhere to the admirable belief that there are no problems, only solutions. Traditional news is disliked precisely for its failure to pay lip service to that credo.

Second, there is the desire for what *USA Today* calls the "journalism of hope". Here, at last, is broadcast journalism which delivers solutions. In both areas, the new infotainment offers a utopian appeal: first, to a sense of community, and second, to a pragmatism which rejects the idea that the world is hopelessly out of control and which abhors television's usual implication that nothing can be done.

Is this a new populist aesthetic purging the bourgeois professionalism of network television in the name of a post-modern videocracy? Or is it simply a new urban idiocy, another turn of the screw by the moguls of consumer surveillance? What isn't going to work here is a trendy, populist cultural-studies take that sees all this in terms of liberatory *empowerment*. If video is increasingly a device for stitching us into a digital *Gesellschaft* (only dis-connect?) that the television set had been accused of dismantling, then just look at the particular way so

much of the new video tech addresses us – as spies and competitors.

When the Frankfurt School critics observed that the culture industries tend increasingly to invade our private lives in the name of capital, they were accused of pessimism. "One could not avoid the suspicion that 'free time' is tending toward its own opposite, and is becoming a parody of itself", wrote Theodor Adorno in an essay which is almost a review-before-the-fact of *America's Funniest Home Videos*. But not even the most committed Marxist party-poopers could have imagined a day when people would sell images of their children being injured in order to gain fame and riches on a show where the top prize is in the order of \$100,000. If this isn't the commodification of everyday life, in which Kodak and Sony are not simply essential to our evenings and weekends, but also now agents for the transformation of 'leisure' time into a potent source of freelance income, then what is?

It is also difficult to avoid the conclusion that in a period of recession and rising concern about crime, tabloid television has found a way to give viewers a sense of real empowerment (the camcorder shoots – it is a weapon) while doing something concrete about crime. In one *I Witness Video* segment, a retail-store camcorder captures images of three burglars stealing the camera itself, and this footage is run over and over, a digital mantra, as if it has some special significance. Which it does. The videotape was shown on local TV news in Des Moines, Iowa, which then led to arrests. The camera protected itself. Maybe these magical powers will protect you, too? The video-thief even gave the medium the ultimate soundbite-as-endorsement: "As soon as I saw that on TV I knew I was going to get caught".

So if the new shows are to be welcomed to the extent that they help chip away at His Majesty Objectivity (this is a matter of meaning), there is no denying that their social uses contain disturbing possibilities, and actualities. As networks and independents (the increasingly powerful unaffiliated stations) parade their post-production techniques and their video vigilantes with new cost-effective reality shows, what's next? America's most hilarious therapy notes? America's most incriminating telephone records? America's most embarrassing trash-can contents? America's strangest X-ray slides? Somewhere out there, a child is waiting to capture parental substance abuse on home videotape, which will then be handed over to the authorities.

But who are the authorities today? Television, or the police? Just watch out, there's a camcorder about.

What you feel is what you get

If the new tabloid and home-video programmes are about policing, then there is also the question of their interesting transgressions of conventional broadcast practice. The new programming undermines broadcast journalism in three ways. First, through its advocacy, the fact that it takes a stand. Second, through the emotional techniques of re-enactment, deployment of music, post-production video

effects, etc. And third, via the anti-professionalism of its DIY camcorder images.

None of these developments is unprecedented. The journalist-as-advocate has explicitly pushed a point of view on television for decades, from *60 Minutes* to *Crimewatch*. The use of dramatic techniques has shadowed the debate about television drama-documentary since the 40s. And the 'amateurism' of the wobbly *vérité* camera has been made famous by documentarians such as Roger Graef and Fred Wiseman. What is new here is the pervasiveness of these techniques in primetime, the extent to which they have begun to leak into more traditional formats (the infamous ABC news segment, aired in August 1989, which recreated FBI footage of alleged spy Felix Bloch), and the new zest with which they are edited. The explicit goal of making an emotional appeal is also much in evidence in new current-affairs shows like *Inside Edition*, *Hard Copy* and *A Current Affair*. Graef's naturalism was intended as a truth-telling machine. Post-naturalism is all about what you feel.

Fakery exposed

While there are earlier examples, such as Gerardo Rivera's primetime drug-busting show *American Vice*, screened in 1986, it was during the 1988-89 television season that the most elaborate breaks with broadcast-journalism techniques came to the fore. It was during that season also that television began to push at the boundaries of acceptable journalistic practices, when the short-lived NBC programme *Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow* went beyond re-enactments to chromakey its reporters into reconstructed scenarios. This is, in fact, a perfect example of an electronic device which exposes a more established practice. The superimposition of chromakey was a piece of fakery that merely amplified the more common practice of having a reporter in, say, Paris, stand in front of an image of the Eiffel Tower.

In autumn 1989, a fascinating Times-Mirror poll revealed widespread mistrust of news conventions. "Americans confused by pseudo-news shows on TV" screamed the *San Francisco Chronicle*. In fact, this questionable conclusion was drawn from empirical data suggesting that viewers (quite correctly) refused to believe that 'news' and 'entertainment' programmes are distinct entities. So where's the confusion? Obviously in the heads of media critics and the concerned but hardly disinterested professionals in the industry, who are unable to comprehend the fact that the public no longer buys the self-serving rhetoric of journalism.

Traditionally, journalism likes to think of itself as a rational beast. Since it isn't (dozens of studies now adequately show that news is partial, subjective and shaped by the social and economic forces which govern its very definition), then the overt introduction of advocacy, affect and manipulation may be no bad thing. Critics of television's factual output (as opposed to ideologues working on behalf of Objective Journalism Inc.) should welcome the development of textual strategies which undermine its credibility and look forward to the day when it introduces canned laughter.

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Dance steps and cityscapes: Jules Munshin, Frank Sinatra and Gene Kelly on the Brooklyn bridge, one of the many locations of 'On the Town', a musical in love with the shapes and

sounds of the city, above; the sailors with Betty Garrett and Ann Miller and Vera-Ellen, strong-willed and competent women who are more than mere decoration, right



With its crane shots and dissolves, 'On the Town' shattered the language of the Hollywood musical, and produced one of the great evocations of city life. By David Parkinson

● 1944: MGM producer Arthur Freed is attempting to persuade Louis B. Mayer that a Broadway show, *On the Town*, is not "smutty" or "Communistic", while his newest dance star, Gene Kelly, is on loan to Columbia, making *Cover Girl* with Rita Hayworth. 5.57am, sometime in 1949: three views of the New York skyline lead into a towering overhead of the Brooklyn naval yard, which dissolves to a long shot of a stevedore lamenting in a resonant operatic tenor – "I feel like I'm not out of bed, yet".

In the five years that separated these unlikely beginnings, Gene Kelly had decided that the techniques so successfully employed on sound stages throughout Hollywood were wholly inappropriate to the recording of dance on film. Kelly went into the pictures "to make money", and his previous experience teaching at his mother's dance school, plus a short but triumphant stage career, meant that he had already developed the basic tenets of his dance style and philosophy by the time he arrived in Hollywood in 1942. A natural and competitive athlete, he considered dancing to be "a man's game" and vowed to bring a new masculinity to American dance, and to capture on screen the "kinetic energy" of live performance. His

knowledge of film technique was sharpened by a stint with the US Naval Photographic Service, where in 1945 he directed a series of shorts on such subjects as the latest fire-fighting equipment and a kamikaze raid. A brief stint as editor of the navy version of the *Army-Navy* newsreel gave him a firm grasp of the potential of both analytical and parallel cutting to create the rhythm with which he could more fully convey the movement and energy of dance. The kamikaze film offered him his first real taste of location shooting, in, of all places, the Brooklyn naval yard.

Kelly had posted his intention to reinvigorate screen dance before his directorial debut with *On the Town*. The 'Alter Ego' sequence in *Cover Girl* ("the most difficult thing I've ever done, a technical torture") had called for pioneering filming and post-production techniques, and, in collaboration with director Charles Vidor, he had been among the first to ensure that the tints and tones of backdrops and costumes corresponded with emotional content. The rotoscoping and matte processes used to create the live-animation 'King Who Couldn't Dance' number in *Anchors Aweigh* (1945) were conceded by Walt Disney himself to be far in advance of those employed in his ►



DANCING IN THE STREETS

◀ own *The Three Caballeros* (1944). And Kelly had even turned inventor for *The Pirate* (1948), creating a device called the 'Ubangi': a long lip fixed to the underside of the camera frame that supported an adjustable mirror into which the camera could shoot, thus augmenting the possibilities of low-angle photography.

Kelly was never in any doubt that *On the Town* was to be a milestone in cinema history. "I really believed it would be a masterpiece because I set out to make it so. Everything we did in the picture was innovative – from the way we flashed the time of day across the screen as if it were a news flash, to the way we cut the picture, which was pretty revolutionary for its time, and which was greatly admired by the French. The fact that make-believe sailors got off a real ship in a real dockyard, and danced through a real New York, was a turning-point in itself".

There is little evidence to suggest that Kelly and co-director Stanley Donen were influenced by anything other than their own knowledge and experience of stage and Hollywood techniques. Nevertheless, it is interesting to note that several segments of *On the Town* contain distinct echoes of the way dance was used to establish rhythm and pace by the impressionists of the French silent screen. Like Abel Gance and Marcel L'Herbier before them, Kelly and Donen delighted in a mobile camera, and fashioned all manner of dollies, cables and cranes to achieve their effects. The use of location, smooth camera movement, and diversity of angle (including breaches of the 180 degree line) likewise suggest the work of Yasujiro Ozu, although his films would scarcely have been known to them in 1949. For all this, however, one suspects that Kelly's fundamental motivation was his screen-dance mandate and commitment to galvanising the musical. His assault on the conventions of the classical Hollywood narrative was born out of necessity – they were in the way.

On the Town set a new agenda for the screen musical, its three ordinary Joes and their hard-working city girls giving it a distinctly proletarian feel. Without it, there would probably never have been a *West Side Story*, *Sweet Charity* or *Fame*. It was a brave, if not wholly successful, attempt to elevate the status of women within the genre: if not as liberated as Cyd Charisse in *It's Always Fair Weather* (1955), Betty Garrett and Ann Miller are still seen to be more than holding their own in occupations considered male preserves, and they are undoubtedly the instigators of their relationships with Frank Sinatra and Jules Munshin. The 'Miss Turnstiles' ballet also suggests that even in the more conven-



tional romance between Kelly and Vera-Allen, he is as much in awe of her aptitude as of her celebrity.

Whatever the innovative qualities we may recognise in retrospect, in 1949 *On the Town* was acclaimed primarily for having almost single-handedly revived the Hollywood musical. Song and dance had been integral to the plot of many Broadway productions since Agnes DeMille's 1944 *Oklahoma!*, yet this was the first time the method had been applied to a movie musical. Coupled with its use of location (particularly daring in an era obsessed with intricate studio lighting), its frenetic pace and the conviviality of its performances, this factor put it streets ahead of such contemporary pictures as *The Barklays of Broadway*, despite the reteaming of Ginger and Fred; *Wabash Avenue*, with Betty Grable; Bing Crosby's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*; and *Two Weeks with Love*, with its musical sequences by Busby Berkeley. The replacement of Sinatra and Munshin with professional dancers in the 'Day in New York' ballet was another adventurous move.

On the Town boasts a bewildering variety of dance styles, including ballet, soft-shoe, ethnic, tap, and comic hoofing. Kelly's response to the challenge of bringing their kinetic energy to the screen was to institute a catalogue of novel camera movements and positions. With Jeanie Coyne and Carol Haney clapping out the rhythm, cameraman Harold Rosson and his crew followed a specially devised choreography of their own in order to execute the series of soaring crane shots and almost reckless fast

tracks which paralleled the vigour of the routines. The camera was thus made to participate in the action, moving to its centre rather than looking on with distant detachment. The slower movements, such as the practice-bar element of the 'Day in New York' ballet used medium close-ups and a swaying spotlight to lend them an intimacy that was equally innovative. Even staple tilts and pan shots appeared to have an added lustre when used, for example, to mimic the to-ing and fro-ing of Betty Garrett's kerb-crawling cab outside the subway station. By having the characters march straight up to the camera, and enter or leave the frame directly alongside it, as in the 'Miss Turnstiles' ballet, Kelly was able to exploit a previously uncharted expanse of screen space, while by cutting and repositioning the camera, as in 'Main Street', he fashioned a diagonal area into which he and Vera-Allen could dance, thus creating the impression of three-dimensional forward movement.

This disregard for the conventional representation of space was compounded by the frequent interaction between the characters and the viewer, as when Ann Miller looks knowingly at the camera as she confides she really likes "bear/bare" skin in 'Prehistoric Man' or when Alice Pearce mischievously chuckles to the audience as she tickles Kelly during 'You Can Count on Me'. Many of the angles Kelly selected (including three breaches of the 180 degree line, and one 360 degree turn on top of the RCA building) were just as rebellious, as was his use of off-screen light and sound in

such moments as the drowning out of dialogue by the arriving subway trains.

Working with Vincente Minnelli on *The Pirate* had obviously fostered in Kelly a liking for the long take, a technique equally beloved of the *nouvelle vague*, whom Kelly claims – not implausibly – to have influenced, along with such Hollywood auteurs as Hitchcock, Hawks, Ford, and Welles. ‘Main Street’, for example, is completed in just three shots. At the other extreme, *On the Town*’s reputation with many cinéastes rests on its dislocation of narrative and compression of time and space through cutting. ‘New York, New York’ takes just under two-and-a-half minutes to cover three-and-a-half hours of real time, eighteen locations, and goodness knows how many miles. Similarly, thanks to a series of dissolves, the hour-long search for Vera-Ellen through five museums occupies less than thirty seconds of screen time. In the ‘Miss Turnstiles’ ballet, the action and timing of the cuts are dictated by Kelly’s off-screen voice recapping the description given on the subway poster and by a series of signals contained within the score (the starting pistol, whistle, and bell during the athletic sequence). The same routine also contains a jump cut and an audacious match shot, as well as a couple more notable long takes.

An agreeable characteristic of many *nouvelle vague* films is the derivation of comedy from in-jokes and ‘humour by homage’. Of course, this was to be an essential element of *Singin’ in the*

Rain (1952), yet film references also abound in *On the Town*. At Symphonic Hall, a Shirley Temple lookalike expresses her resentment at her mother turning into “another Margaret O’Brien”, while Florence Bates’ crusty ballet mistress claims to have “taught them all, from Nijinsky to Mickey Rooney”. In ‘Prehistoric Man’, mention is made of Van Johnson, Kelly’s co-star in the Broadway production of *Pal Joey*, while Jules Munshin apes the wide-eyed lechery of Harpo Marx. Indeed, repeated viewings of this number also reveal what appears to be an outrageous in-joke. Is that Frank Sinatra beneath the grass skirt and bone mask, or is it, as I suspect, Kelly, yet again duetting with himself by means of a split screen?

Despite its dockside reunions, the film’s ending is far from unreservedly happy-ever-after. The time checks (cf Godard’s disruptive use of caption in *Weekend*) are a constant re-emphasis of the ‘live for the moment’ ethic, while the repetition of ‘New York, New York’ reminds us that the trio were initially more intent on dates for a day than long-term commitment. There is little to suggest that Kelly’s romance will be any more permanent than those of the others, witness the disappointments and disillusion of the central characters in *It’s Always Fair Weather*, which was originally envisaged as a sequel to *On the Town*.

Kelly remains adamant that “there is no such thing as an auteur in the musical film... I am not an auteur, and nobody else is an auteur

who makes a film. It takes a lot of people, a lot of co-operation”. It can be argued, however, that in certain sections of *On the Town*, primarily those with the deepest roots in the traditions of both the Broadway and Hollywood musical, Kelly might have been better advised to curb his passion for teamwork and to follow the instincts that gave so many other elements their vitality. While more than well served by Leonard Bernstein’s score, even Kelly and Donen had to struggle to enliven ‘Main Street’ and ‘You’re Awful’, ironically two of the songs Roger Edens was asked to compose with cinematic possibilities in mind. Betty Comden and Adolph Green’s screenplay can be accused of disappointing lapses into typical musical business, particularly during the Coney Island sequences, where the unrelenting demands of narrative linearity leave little room for anything other than the tying of loose ends.

Although it remains eminently watchable, modern critics tend to regard *On the Town* as a flawed masterpiece. There is little doubt that it suffers from being too much a film of its day. Its post-war optimism now seems gauche, and indeed Kelly was quick to lampoon it himself just six years later. Filmed in Cinemascope, the more cynical *It’s Always Fair Weather* was to take the musical into even more unfamiliar territory and further tax Kelly’s ingenuity as both director and choreographer. And though the routines in *On the Town* possess vitality and excitement, the choreography in *An American in Paris* and *Singin’ in the Rain* is markedly more innovative and assured, while Kelly himself undoubtedly exhibited more of his athletic grace and fervour elsewhere.

In the final analysis, *On the Town* is one of the glories of the Hollywood studio era. Its portrait of New York is every bit as evocative of the momentum and immediacy of urban life as such classics of the 20s city cycle as Ruttmann’s *Berlin*, *Symphony of a Great City*, Vertov’s *Man With a Movie Camera*, Cavalcanti’s *Rien que les heures*, and Vigo’s *A propos de Nice*. Raymond Williams has claimed that “the experience of the city is the fictional method; or the fictional method is the experience of the city. What matters is that the vision... is the form of the writing”. *On the Town* is clearly such a fusion of form and content, with Kelly and Donen using camera movement and a bold, new filmic language to capture the pace and excitement of a day in the life of New York. It is to Kelly’s credit that a film from such a populist genre has had such an impact on so many aspects of the cinematic art. ‘*On the Town*’ will be at the NFT in March as part of the *All Singin’, All Dancin’* programme



City lights: the three sailors together, in a film where the immediacy and momentum of urban life is portrayed in a dramatic cinematic language, top left;

Vera-Ellen and Gene Kelly in a routine celebrating just one of the bewildering variety of dance styles ‘On the Town’ brought to the Hollywood screen, above

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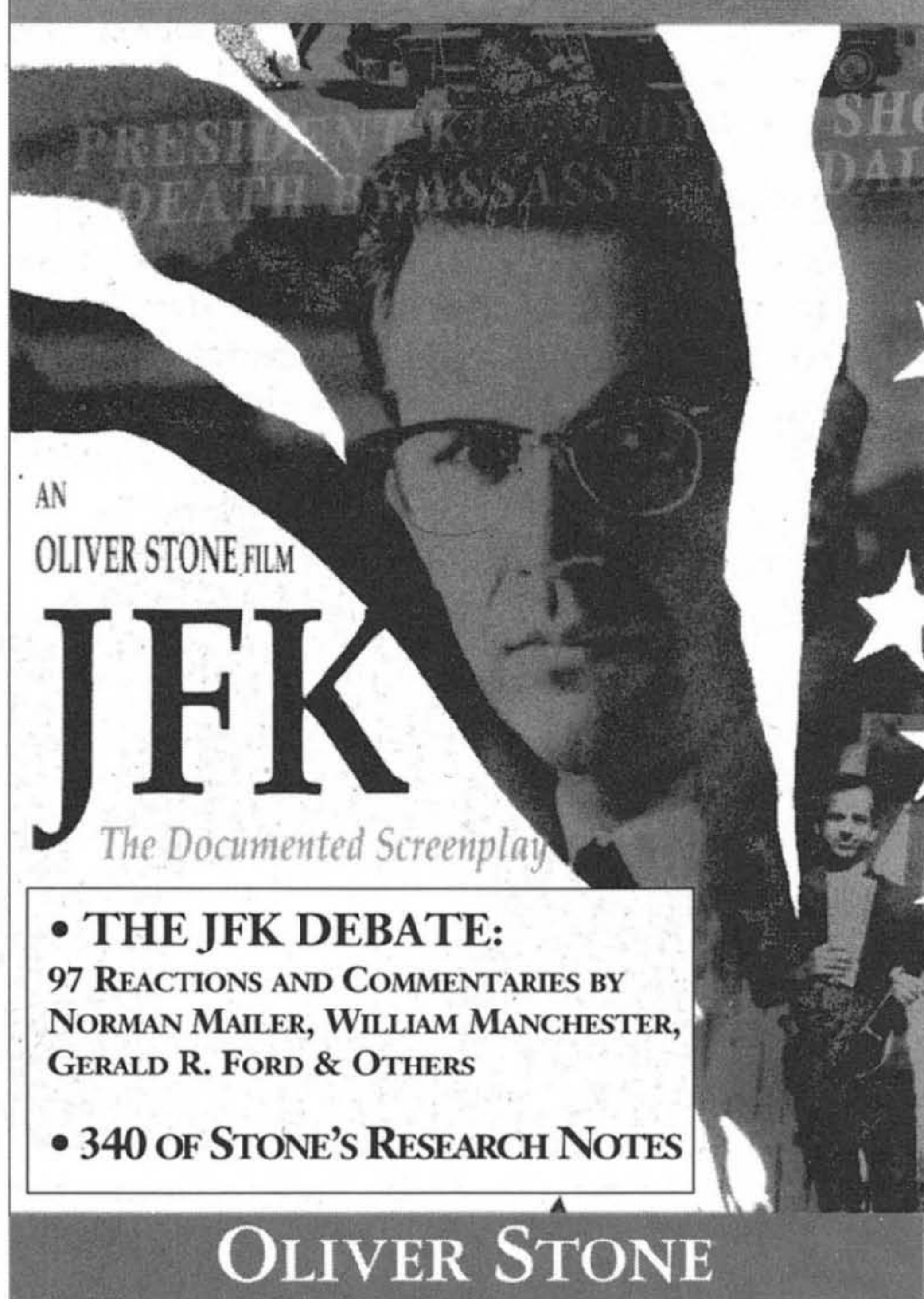
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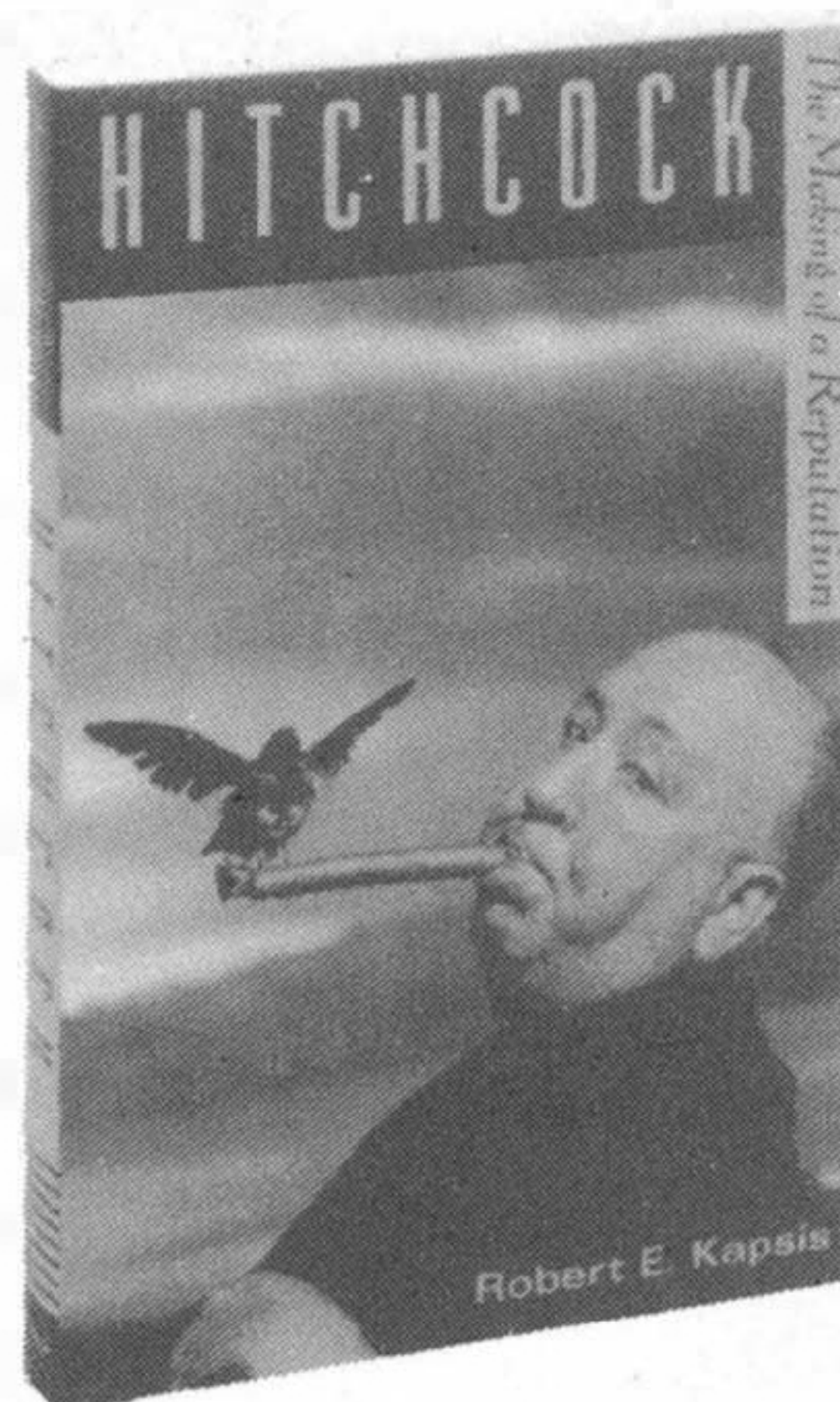
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Immersed in film

"Don't worry if the movie is too short. I'll just put in a dream". Buñuel talking to a Mexican film producer.

Since childhood I've had a recurring dream that seems to surface at odd times. The setting is based on a redundant water tank behind a cinema I used to visit when I was a kid living in the suburbs of Glasgow. The water tank was large, and seemed to occupy an area equivalent to a tennis court. The water tank was constructed from concrete and resembled a shallow swimming pool. The pool collected rainwater to a depth of a couple of feet and was cordoned off with a low wire fence, with gaps between the mesh. The surface of the water that collected in the pool changed with the seasons. It was the neighbourhood home for frogs and toads. The surface changed from brown to an acid green with slime-encrusted walls during hot weather. It is impossible for me to verify its exact dimensions as the area was redeveloped into a car park and then a supermarket.

Cinema habits were different in the early 50s in Glasgow than they are now. It was possible then to get into a cinema and watch complete programmes, newsreels, forthcoming attractions, a backing film and the main feature two or three times around. This meant you could stay in the nocturnal world of the cinema for six to nine hours. I suppose it was an act of endurance, and after marathon viewing sessions new records for daylight deprivation could be flaunted to schoolmates. This phenomenon was reminiscent of how long you could stay underwater holding your breath at the local swimming pool.

Sensory deprivation

I was reflecting recently on this early sensory deprivation and musing on how the excesses are necessary in marking out stages in one's doubtful development. The image of the water tank at the rear of the cinema and the screen in the cinema seemed to be connected. The two surfaces – the cinema screen and the disused tank – were about the same size, one surface vertical and the other horizontal. Visiting the water tank when I didn't have enough money to immerse myself in the film was a substitute, and I often wondered what lurked below the tank's murky surface. It was not until I went to sleep that the underwater cinema came alive.

In the dream, the water appeared ini-

Artist Peter Wilson peers into the depths of his past, catching glimpses of the Toledo cinema in Glasgow, strange creatures from the deep – and the films of etymologist Luis Buñuel



tially to be still, but on further gazing the surface started to undulate, revealing dark shapes reminiscent of a kind of fish that didn't appear in any of the *National Geographic* magazines that the fortunate at school were allowed to read after successfully answering questions about far-away countries. The shapes continued to move up to the surface of the pool and strange fins pierced the surface, sometimes revealing teeth and jaws. The size of the beasts increased and paralysed me as I watched from the side of the pool. The performance continued and each subsequent appearance became more grotesque; I froze in wonderment and fear at this display from the deep. Over the years, the dream



has featured less frequently, but has re-emerged and fused into a series of paintings entitled *Under the Surface*, *Toilers of the Deep*, and *Instincts Lost and Found*.

To kill or not to kill

The cinema in Glasgow still exists, but now it has been divided into several smaller cinemas. When I remember the cinema of my youth, it had white rough-cast cement walls that betrayed a strong Moorish architectural influence. The cinema was called the Toledo and was part of the old ABC chain. The Spanish theme was carried throughout the building, including bullfighting scenes on the tiles in the lavatories and Spanish shawls hung from the false balconies that were a feature on the side walls of the stalls. This extravagance culminated in elaborate silk and velvet curtains that protected the silver screen. The curtains had appliqué butterflies and stars and resembled an outsize dressing gown. As the house lights in the cinema dimmed, this curtain swished open silently to reveal the screen.

Was the viewing of films from an early age in this mock-Spanish setting a fertile

preparation for the later viewing of Buñuel's work in art-house conditions; or maybe it was the musings by the derelict water tank that fuelled the imagination of an ex-ABC minor? The Buñuel connection is more than casual, and aspects of his film-making have influenced my work. Before Buñuel started making films he studied etymology at the University of Madrid – his use of insects in *Un Chien Andalou* is fascinating.

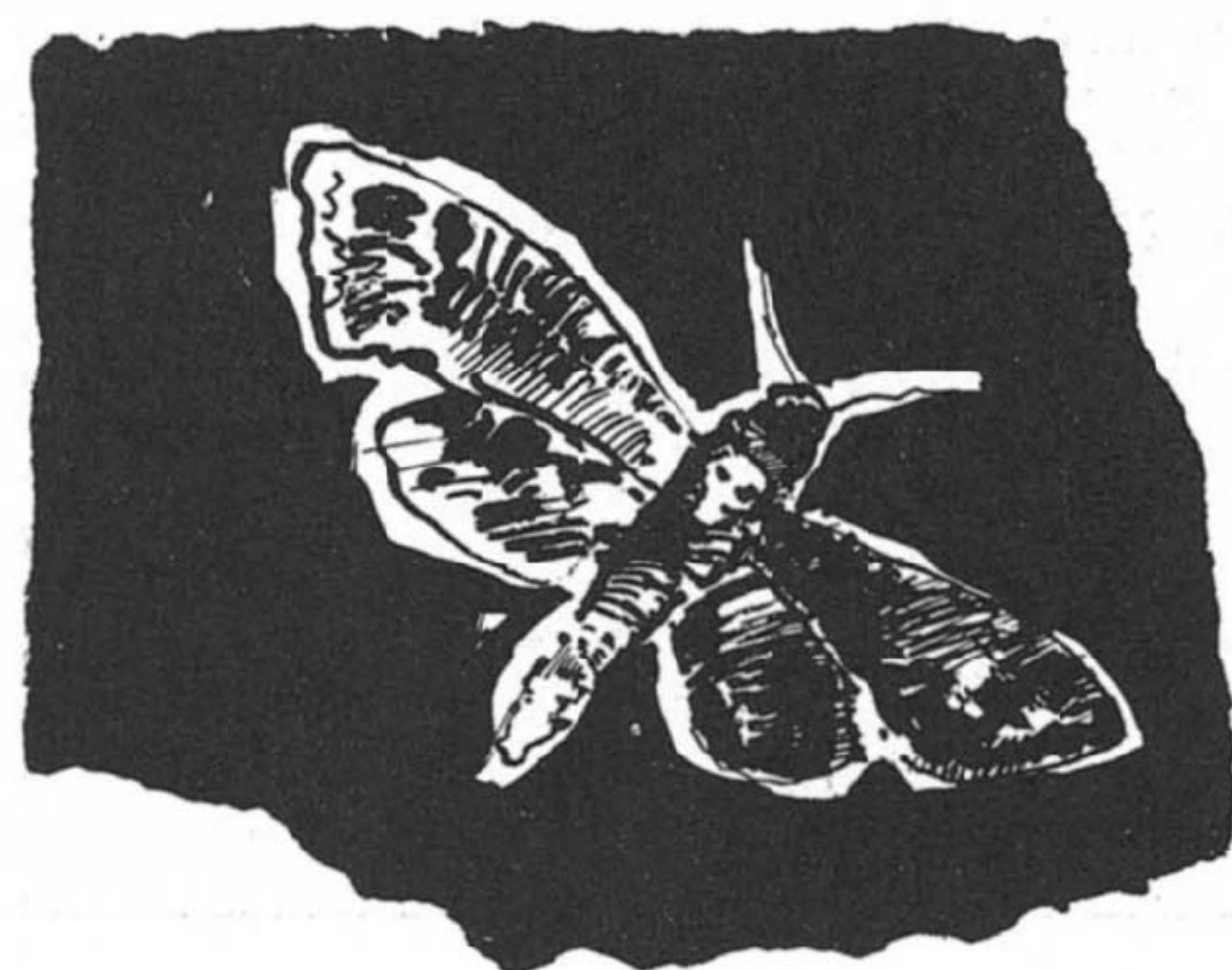
"To kill or not to kill an insect is a decision which faces several characters. It is morally all the more indicative as the act involves no retaliatory consequence, because it is a matter of impulse rather than reflection, while from conventional viewpoints it has no moral significance. Thus the insect motif sometimes suggests a reverence for life. But this reverence is amused and sardonic. The sudden death



of an insect can also imply that the man can die as abruptly, and as unimportantly.

"Further, the cut-ins of insects with the omnipresence of animals generally throughout Buñuel's films jolts us by its reassertions of the ubiquity, the viability of alien modes of instinct by a planet which ludicrously we tend to think of as ours". (Raymond Durgnat, *Luis Buñuel*, 1967)

Peter Wilson's exhibition 'Hunger & Thirst' is at the Lamont Gallery, London E2 from 12 January to 13 February



Cutting it out

Nicky Hamlyn

First Cut: Conversations with Film Editors
Gabriella Oldham, University of
California Press, \$35, 426pp

Film editing is the invisible link in the production chain that begins with a script and ends with a release print. The film editor sits all day in a darkened room, unseen except by the producer and director; the success of his or her work is judged by the extent to which it goes unnoticed. Even when editing draws attention to itself, as in the choppy "You're looking at me?" scene with Robert De Niro in *Taxi Driver*, the editor's aim is to keep the film moving, to push the story along. Because of its self-effacing nature, the editing process is surrounded by ignorance and misunderstanding. It is this that *First Cut* aims to dispel.

The book consists of interviews with twenty-two film editors, mostly American, working in different areas of the industry from cinema to cable television, in features and documentaries, some based in Hollywood and some in New York. Each interview is approached from a different angle and titled accordingly – 'Telling stories', 'Precursive editing', or 'Seeing the invisible' – so though the same questions recur, a different shade of response is elicited.

The topics explored range across every conceivable aspect of the film editor's world, from historical perspectives on how working patterns have changed in Hollywood since the demise of the studio system to detailed discussion of the decision-making methods employed in the cutting room. The book places editing firmly at the heart of the film-making process: if anyone believes editing is a simple matter of topping and tailing shots and assembling them according to the director's script, this book will disabuse them.

In documentaries there is often no script at all, simply transcripts of interviews and anything between ten and one hundred hours of rushes from which the editor must construct a plausible sixty-minute story. Although the director will have got the required shots, he or she may have no clear idea about what angle to take, let alone how to shape the material.

Even in features, where there is a detailed script, editors often take bold initiatives to rescue a scene or to make it work better. In John Frankenheimer's 1970 film *I Walk the Line*, editor Harold Cress needed a close-up of a woman for an early scene, but the only shot he had was from the end of the film, where the woman was wearing a different dress. He sent that shot to the opticals department, where it was copied in close-up and the dress cropped out. Frankenheimer could not remember having shot any close-ups for the scene, but was delighted with the result.

Documentary editors make similar decisions, but in their case ethical issues of truthfulness arise. Different editors give various reasons for 'cheating' scenes, among them Geof Bartz on *Lifeline*, a 70s series about doctors made for NBC television. Here Bartz had a sequence in which a court order was required to permit a hospital to give blood to two Jehovah's witnesses who needed operations. In reality, the

blood was given and then permission sought; in the film, Bartz reversed the chronology so permission was sought before the transfusion. In the same sequence, he also used a shot of blood being taken as blood being transfused. Bartz's justification was that he had chosen to cut the film "feature style", going for narrative and drama rather than a more truthful documentary approach. Many American television companies want documentaries to look like features, and pressure is put on film-makers to produce pacy programmes with gripping storylines that can compete commercially with fiction films.

For the *Lifeline* series Bartz was both producer and supervising editor, and so could take controversial decisions on his own that would usually require careful discussion. Good relations are obviously essential for this, and editors bend over backwards to keep on good terms with their director. But sometimes relations break down. Editor Tom Rolf spent seventeen months working on Michael Cimino's *Heaven's Gate*. As he began cutting, he realised that Cimino had focused all his attention on style and period detail, employing specialist hatters to make real beaver-fur hats, for example, but neglecting to shoot the basic material necessary to make the storyline work. Relations deteriorated until in the end Rolf and Cimino would communicate only via Rolf's assistant. Eventually Rolf left the production four months before the premiere, at which the film flopped.

One important truth to emerge from *First Cut* is that there are no rules to editing, only personal preferences. Some editors cut with music, others without. Some always start a scene on a speaking character, others show the reaction shot first, with the spoken lines coming from off screen. Many editors sacrifice continuity to drama or rhythm if they feel it moves the film along better: for example, in a scene inside a taxi in Scorsese's *New York New York*, shots where the taxi is moving are cut directly on to shots where it is stationary, but the scene was judged acceptable because the cuts were right in other respects.

One thing all editors agree on is the importance of a sense of rhythm, and many draw analogies with music. There is an indefinable art to making a cut work: it can be a matter of moving the cutting point one frame forwards or backwards, or of removing or replacing one or two frames. All this crucial 'fine cutting' takes time, and editors agree that now that Hollywood is run by "Harvard Business School graduates", schedules have become humanly impossible. To meet the deadline for Ridley Scott's *Black Rain*, Tom Rolf had to work seven days a week for four months. Now more than ever, the buck stops at the cutting room.

Falling stars

Claire Monk

Dietrich

Donald Spoto, Bantam Press,
£16.99, 307pp

Judy Garland

David Shipman, 4th Estate, £17.99, 522pp

George Michael once said that it's not something extra that makes a star, but something missing. In Hollywood iconography,

Dietrich and Garland incarnate polar extremes: Dietrich as icon of erotic power, Garland as victim. But their fascination derives from ambiguities played out in their lives: Dietrich's perversely seductive blend of fluid sexual identity and chilling emotional detachment; Garland's embodiment of the sick tangle of showbiz notions about innate talent and inevitable suffering.

Reading these two new biographies confirms that mere facts cannot explain where star power resides. Both authors are amusingly suited to their subjects. Spoto is the cool, cynical professional, never admitting to any unseemly involvement; Shipman is the fan-biographer, shamelessly sharing the moment in 1955 when he became Garland's "most devoted admirer". Where Spoto acknowledges the help of a dozen libraries and institutions, Shipman thanks half a dozen members of the Judy Garland Fan Club.

Spoto's book is a fascinating analysis of Dietrich as "her own self-generated product" – a triumph of persistence, image-manipulation and self-promotion over dumpiness and limited talent. As the biographer who 'outed' Olivier, he makes a shrewd chronicler of her polymorphously prodigious sex life, but seems to shrink from the pleasure she must have taken in her own seductive power. His explanation that she "equated sex more with the offering of comfort than with the pursuit of her own pleasure" hardly accounts for the bedroom farce of her multiple involvements – or her persistence in pursuing sometimes unwilling women, working on their resistance by sending violets and more violets. (Dietrich made use of this particular queer code even when the recipient was unlikely to get the message.)

What is missing is any sense of Dietrich's active sexuality as she herself experienced it. Instead, she is analysed in terms of the slavish devotion she aroused in others: Spoto's perceptive account of the creative/destructive symbiosis between Dietrich and director Josef von Sternberg suggests that this confusion was endemic among the men (far more than the women) in her life. And Spoto makes clear the disturbing implications of von Sternberg's claim that *The Blue Angel* and its successors are transparent representations of the 'real' Dietrich.

It is probably more accurate to read von Sternberg's cinematic tributes to Dietrich's "bewitching indifference" as transparent representations of male masochism. The



BFI STILL, POSTERS AND DESIGNS



The bewitchingly indifferent Marlene Dietrich, above, and the suffering victim Judy Garland, below left, incarnate polar extremes of Hollywood star iconography

tortured sexual psychology of these films renders problematic Spoto's claims for them as "a ruthless critique of traditional gender roles". He also misses the complexities of cross-gender identification and therefore the full richness of Dietrich's queer and camp appeal. In failing to see that both men and women might identify with her erotic power rather than simply succumbing to it, he attributes a narrowness of response to her audience out of kilter with the qualities of the star herself.

Shipman's book on Garland shows little interest in her status as gay icon – though it does contain an anecdote about Miss Show Business jerking off her (gay, male) hairdresser in the back of a car, and chronicles the special affinity of this daughter of a homosexual father with gay men. The difficulty with Garland's life as a narrative is that we know from the start how it will end. A psychological or political approach is needed if the facts are to yield any new insights; unfortunately, Shipman simply supplies an excess of detail which, for instance, muffles the impact of Garland's exploitation by MGM.

The book falls back on the usual show-bizzy means to explain Garland's undoubted magic – celebrity testimonies; endless rapt accounts of her tottering terrified on stage, her speech slurred by a grotesque excess of drugs and vodka, before once again transporting her audience into a frenzy of laughter, tears and adoration. The meaning of the gulf between these rituals of ecstatic transcendence and the personal horror beneath goes wholly unanalysed; so

does the ghoulish aspect of such adulation. Against Shipman's best intentions, we are reduced to voyeurs.

But above all, we are brought no closer to an understanding of Garland's subjective suffering. With their mania for minutiae, these books still leave us hungry when it comes to the mysteries that *matter*. It's partly the form itself that fails – where we seek a solution, all the conventional biographer can supply is a new constellation of clues. What we crave but can't have is the psyche beneath the skin – but then that seems to have eluded those who knew Dietrich and Garland as well.

Light reading

David Curtis

Light Moving in Time: Studies in the Visual Aesthetics of Avant-garde Film

William C. Wees, University of California Press, \$35 (hb), \$15 (pb), 211pp

An immediate attraction of Bill Wees' slim volume is that he has seen most of the work made by the film-makers he discusses and, to judge by the detail he goes into, more than once. This depth of knowledge is still rare among critics of the avant-garde, and it gains Wees a place on a very short list which would include P. A. Sitney, Gene Youngblood, Parker Tyler and Gregory Battcock from the 60s and early 70s, and David James and Scott MacDonald from the 80s.

Wees also scores highly in that he takes seriously the avant-garde claim that film is

primarily a visual medium. So his analysis of work by Stan Brakhage, Kenneth Anger, Jordan Belson, James Whitney, Paul Sharits and Michael Snow, a conspicuously white, male, North American group with a distinctly West-Coast bias, is delivered in predominantly visual terms. With the exception of Anger, these are some of the most abstract film-makers, but Wees avoids the well-trodden critical strategies of comparing their work to paintings (as Sitney does) or retracing the history which links them to Constructivism and Surrealism.

Instead, he attempts to establish a quasi-scientific argument for this work's importance by cataloguing the similarities between the peripheral and heightened vision described by science, and the qualities of image encountered in avant-garde film. He also chronicles how perception of the visual world in western society has capitulated to Renaissance concepts of perspective, culminating in the inscription of a fixed perspective in the camera lens. So for Wees, the avant-garde project becomes a struggle to free the viewer from the tyranny of perspective, and to recapture the experience of the "untutored eye". Wees' most frequent guide is Aldous Huxley (*The Doors of Perception*, et al); the hero of his book Brakhage, from whose writing the term "untutored eye" comes, and who Wees presents as the realiser of Huxley's ambition that vision be "freed from the drab blur of triteness or familiarity".

Brakhage is presented as a documentary film-maker: "I document the act of seeing as well as everything the light brings me". Anger is a film-maker obsessed with the quality of translucence, with light and water; he is the seeker of Huxley's "preternatural light". The pattern films of Belson and Whitney and the flicker and subliminal-image films of Sharits derive their power from their correspondence to patterns already in the human mind. It is a reading that can have amusing consequences, as when Wees – describing the 'Blue Velvet' sequence in Anger's *Scorpio Rising* – remarks loftily: "The result is a mood that rises above mere sensuality and self-indulgence. It suggests reverence for these light-bearing garments".

Wees' text is littered with quotes from his subjects and guides, which makes for heavy reading in the familiar American thesis-book style, though the statements are well chosen and illustrate the extent to which his reading is a reflection of the film-makers' aspirations. The account of Snow in the final chapter is the most measured; Wees has by this point exhausted his determination to provide a good scientific provenance for every avant-garde invention, and settles for the simpler task of restoring the balance between the analytical Snow (Sitney's "dean of structural film-makers") and the Snow who creates work using the language of retinal sensation. He becomes a film-maker "who uses the visual means of cinema to address both eye and mind".

This book offers a valuable alternative reading for those already familiar with the North American avant-garde of the 60s and 70s, and for those interested in a non-psychoanalytic and non-semiotic approach to the study of perception in relation to experimental film. For readers new to the subject, better to begin with Sitney for his insight into the avant-garde's literary ►

◀ and poetic connections, and James for his discussion of the socio-political context in which the avant-garde has operated.

Fantastic voyages

Linda Ruth Williams

Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture
Henry Jenkins, Routledge, £35, (hb), £9.99 (pb), 343pp

Textual Poachers begins and ends with William Shatner's exasperated charge to a group of Trekkies: "Get a life". The term 'fan' may derive from 'fanatic', but for Henry Jenkins, fans are not the maladjusted, train-spotting obsessives suggested by Shatner's retort, but active producers and manipulators of meaning. According to Jenkins, "the most direct and vocal affront to the legitimacy of traditional cultural hierarchies" is taking place not in university cultural studies departments, but at fan conventions, where Klingon might be spoken, or 'filk music' played. For the uninitiated, this is folk music produced by and for fans, in what Jenkins, turning to Mikhail Bakhtin, calls "the skilful management of hetroglossia" – like 'The Sound of Cylons' as a response to *Battlestar Galactica* or 'Making Wookie' after *Star Wars*. What this sharp and wide-ranging analysis wittily demonstrates is that fandom is already a life.

The book is concerned with the conflict between these active fan interpretations and traditional notions of authorial intentionality. Fans, as the title of the book suggests, are the poachers of those meanings which traditionally belong to the authorial 'landowners' – writers, producers, television channels. In effect, readers seize authorial rights for themselves in a redistribution of cultural wealth. However, Jenkins fails to address the question of whether cult television can be said to *have* an author. It is only in the case of *Twin Peaks* that the model strictly works, with fans manifesting an angry paranoia in response to David Lynch and Mark Frost's manipulation of images, their resistance becoming a kind of guerilla warfare against a despotic auteur.

But fans live not only outside the laws of authorial intentionality; they also transgress the dictates of highbrow taste. Jenkins' ideal fan is not simply (to borrow from Elaine Showalter) the Annie Hall of television consumption, possessing "remnants snatched from mass culture"; fandom is culture "in the margins... built from the semiotic raw materials the media provides".

Fans, then, are collage artists rather than cultural bag-ladies. They use the basic material of television like putty, remoulding and expanding its limits in novels, amateur screenplays, fanzines and paintings, or in home-edited videos set to popular songs. (When it comes to the latter, one wishes the book were accompanied by a video in addition to its tantalising stills, to illustrate the montage of crotch shots from *The Professionals* set to 'I am a Rock', or Spock and Kirk in a series of buddy shots set to 'I Needed You'.) Jenkins' analysis of the growth of video technology also demonstrates how the medium has enabled more detailed forms of visual re-reading.

Jenkins' fans are anything but reverential, taking extreme liberties with their

source material which can make you wish that they were asked to make the creative decisions every now and then. One *Star Trek* spin-off redresses the sexual imbalance of the series by sending an all-female landing party led by Uhura and Chapel into a lesbian separatist space colony (presumably a place where Captain Kirk cannot boldly go). *The Cosmic Fuck*, "a vintage example of Kirk/Spock fan erotica", sees Kirk actively helping his buddy through Pon Farr (the Vulcan mating fever) before McCoy joins them in a *ménage à trois*.

Such examples are offered in the context of a forceful call for the rehabilitation of trivia, cast as a radical form of "unauthorised and unpoliced knowledge existing outside of academic institutions but a source of popular expertise for the fans". *Textual Poachers* is a fascinating and scholarly text which, to quote Stuart Hall, reinforces the argument that "We are all, in our heads, several different audiences at once".

Future visibility poor

Bob Ferguson

Visible Fictions
John Ellis, Routledge, £10.99, 301 pp

When *Visible Fictions* was first published ten years ago, it was a breath of fresh air. Here was a book about cinema and television which was informed by major theoretical debates, was enthusiastic about its chosen media, and was at the same time highly readable. Many of the concepts which Ellis introduced are now central tenets of courses as diverse as Communication and Film degrees and the General Certificate of Secondary Education.

It was Ellis who introduced the notion of 'narrative image' – the 'idea' of the film which is circulated and promoted *before* we go to see it. He also elucidated the complex concept of voyeurism in cinema and employed psychoanalytic theory in a lively, intelligible manner. His chapters on cinema and television narration have lost none of their relevance. For example, Ellis pointed out that there was no real dissimilarity between the narrational form of television news and of soap opera. The difference, he noted, lay in the source material.

There are two main changes in this second edition. The first is a revised and expanded bibliography, which is of marginal interest. The second is the replacement of the final chapter, previously entitled 'Peering into the future', with another entitled 'Postface'. It is to this chapter that we should look to 'place' *Visible Fictions* in the context of the 90s.

It is obvious, but necessary, to point out that much has happened in the last ten years. Not just the wars and economic decline. Not just the crumbling of public-service broadcasting and the (relative) rise of satellite and cable television. Not just the continued erosion of the cinema as a major cultural force and the consolidation of video as its ubiquitous but impoverished replacement.

Ellis is painfully aware of many of these issues, as well as those which have arisen on the theoretical front. He notes in passing, for instance, that the slightest departure

from the 'meaning-routines' of broadcast television can be made to seem innovatory, encouraging serious critics to label *Twin Peaks* as post-modern television.

Ellis argues that broadcast television is concerned with just that – broadcasting. It shouts out its message to all and sundry. Cinema, on the other hand, rejoices in its role as "playground for the mad and the marginal". He has not changed his mind about the sharp distinctions he drew between the two media in the first edition. Although he sees television as occupying a special place within the social discourse of the nation, Ellis also believes that television is "busy making itself less important". The evidence suggests, he argues, that the more choice the audience has, the less it ends up viewing.

There is a scarcely veiled sadness, or possibly fatigue in the new chapter. Ellis left the graves (sic) of academe ten years ago in buoyant mood to become an independent television producer. He concluded the first edition with a declared interest in attempts to change the form of broadcast and cinematic images through new forms of organisation and "the creation of an active audience around public exhibition". The new edition ends: "Two things are certain, however: both cinema and television will continue to fail to learn from their own and each other's histories; and, as with all revolutions, the outcome may change rather less than was expected either by participants or by observers".

Maybe. Ellis is, of course, one of a generation of scholars and producers who have been blighted by the years of Thatcherism. But *Visible Fictions* has survived, and remains one of the best overall introductions to cinema, television and video.

Story time

Anthony Easthope

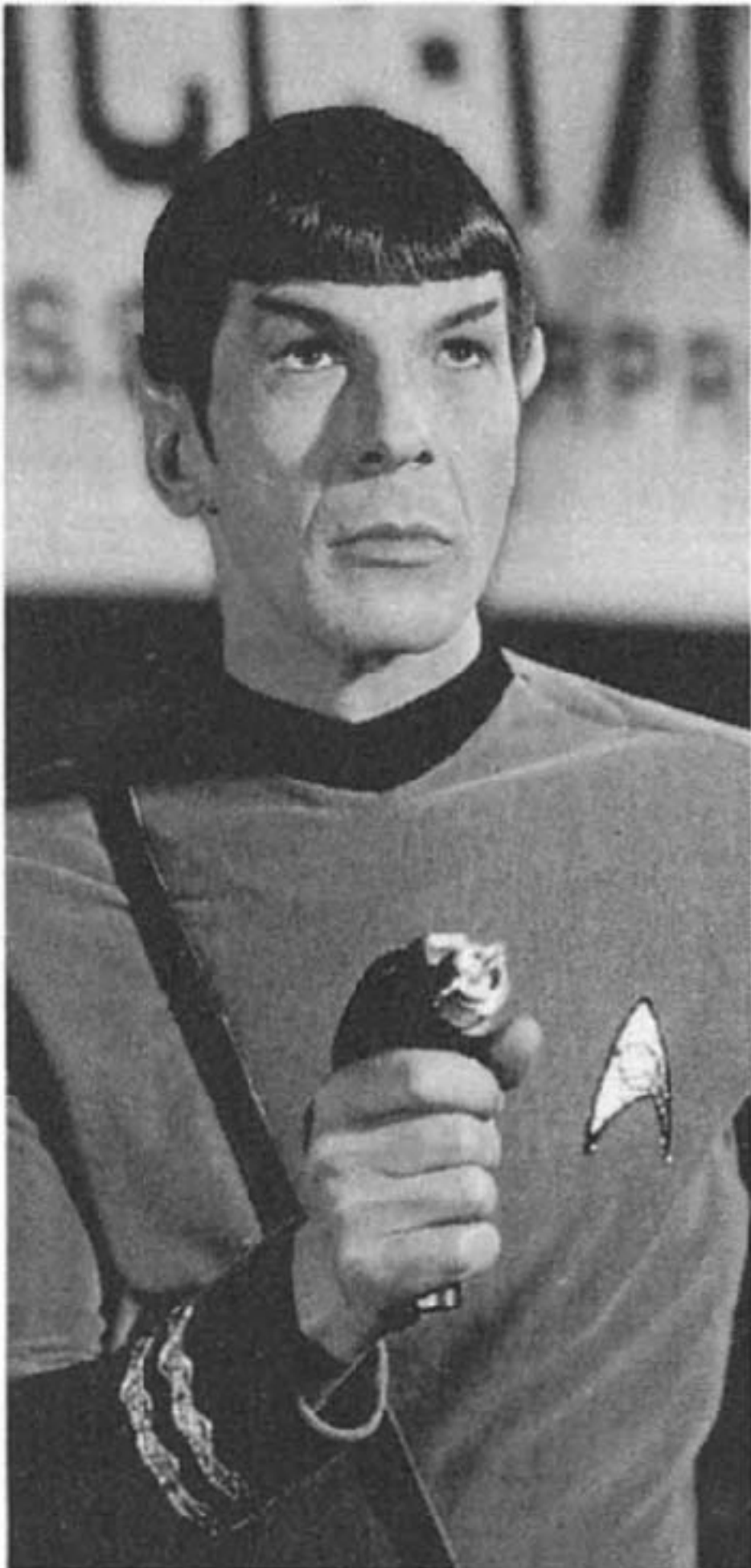
Narrative Comprehension and Film
Edward Branigan, Routledge, £35 (hb), £12.99 (pb), 325pp

Once upon a time there were no narratives, just stories, of all kinds, shapes and sizes. But in 1928, Vladimir Propp proposed that inside the mythical tales of Russian folklore there was a single pattern or model. Linguistics had shown there was a formal similarity between sentences with entirely different meanings, so Propp believed that from only thirty-one 'functions' (such as 'the villain', 'the hero', 'a difficult task', and so on) he could generate hundreds of different stories.

Just as in Propp's folklore, simple Ivan is persuaded to leave his hut to find a princess with hair made of real gold, so ever since narratologists have pursued a quest for the perfect theory to explain all narratives. As our post-modern age becomes more sceptical about its own great narratives, writers such as Paul Ricoeur and Hayden White have turned to the idea of narrative itself as a way to think about the meaning of life. Narratologists want a perfect, closed system, but at the same time know perfectly well they'll never get it. So part of the interest in books on narrative lies in how they come unstuck.

Edward Branigan's failure is very interesting, partly because film theory is a lot

Cosmic Puck: Leonard Nimoy as Mr Spock boldly goes where no man has gone before



BFI STILL POSTERS AND DESIGNS

further advanced than work on literature or painting. We tend to think that narrative is fiction opposed to fact, but Branigan convincingly argues that narrative should be contrasted not with truth, but with non-narrative forms such as the list (recipes, dictionaries, job descriptions and so on). All narratives make some sort of sense by illustrating the kind of thing people do, but some narratives are 'determinate' (his word) because they refer to an actual situation. These, in other words, are true.

Basing himself in cognitive psychology and a "pragmatics of comprehension", Branigan proposes that we can grasp a film's story because we already have various narrative schemas in our heads which we try out until one fits. Or fits well enough, because in any narrative sequence there is always some disparity, something missing. Narratives are ways of linking events through a sense of cause and effect. But this sense of narrative as explanation emerges only after the fact – it is we who look for the connections, need to believe this caused that because it came before it.

So we viewers make a film's narrative as much as its narration makes our response. That is why I can leave the cinema and tell someone in my own words what happened, without rehearsing every detail of the movie's own images and incidents.

Branigan illustrates all this with his own non-narrative catalogues and schemes. Besides the five types of narrative theory, his preference is for lists of eight – the eight components of a narrative schema, the eight levels of narration. There are some shrewd and informative discussions of individual films, especially *Lady in the Lake* and *Letter from an Unknown Woman*. But the fun really starts when Branigan's carefully constructed shelving and pigeon-holing systems begin to sag and buckle, a process he himself watches with a resigned and clear-eyed honesty.

In the end, narrative structures are only narrative structures, bare bones unless brought to life in a historical situation and for an actual viewing subject, as Branigan well knows. So though he is committed to cognitive psychology, he admits that narrative also has an implicit and invisible effect. This, he suggests, only psychoanalysis can pretend to discover. Determined to give an objective analysis of how narrative works, he freely acknowledges at the end of his chapter on 'Subjectivity' that the rhetoric of a narrative cannot be separated "from the many ways in which it is taken by an audience".

In *Letter from an Unknown Woman*, Lisa tells her sad story while we watch it, or a *version* of it. Branigan lists eleven plausibly different ways of relating what we hear and what we see, but acknowledges that we cannot make sense of the film by narratology alone. Its narrative complexity and ambiguity cannot be understood outside the masculine and feminine discourses at work within patriarchy, so that we may take it as a story of and for the male or, as Tania Modleski argues, as "a woman's film", or, as Robin Wood speculates, it may even be possible to blame Lisa and her refusal to compromise.

Unlike most narratologists, Branigan is willing to see the limits of his own theory-building. It is this readiness which makes his book such a lively and intriguing read.

Going to the movies

Barry Salt

Shared Pleasures

Douglas Gomery, University of Wisconsin Press/BFI Publishing, £14.95, 381pp

Shared Pleasures is an economic and social history of film exhibition in the US. There has been little research into this aspect of the movies until recently, perhaps because the business of film exhibition is indifferent to the exact nature of the movies it shows, providing they are reasonably attractive to audiences, a conclusion borne out by the author's findings. Like all good histories, *Shared Pleasures* is organised chronologically and, in this case, thematically, with sections on the general development of the American movie-exhibition business and on particular aspects of it, such as theatres for minorities and alternative methods of delivering films to audiences. Given that the book covers the distance from Kinetoscope parlour to satellite television, the treatment gets rushed at times, but it is an enthusiastic rush.

Much of the book is based on original research in trade papers, though Gomery also draws on the work of other Americans. He uncovers aspects of film presentation that will be new to most people, for example the fascinating story of the rise and decline of US 'art-house' exhibition. After the Second World War, there was a massive increase in these specialised theatres, many of which opened with classy British product like *The Fallen Idol* and *Quartet*. As the art-house sector continued to grow, reaching some 500 nationwide in the 50s and 60s, interest swung away from British films to continental and Japanese cinema. The number declined in the 70s and they were finished off by videocassettes in the 80s.

Other topics interestingly dealt with include the importance of the introduction of air conditioning into cinemas and conditions for the black movie audience. However, Gomery often misses aspects of the economic causality of developments – for example, he fails to point out that the appearance of the nickelodeon was determined by the availability of a sufficient supply of story films several minutes long to permit continuous programming in fixed venues. More too could be uncovered about the mechanisms involved in the early development of Technicolor, or about how Marcus Loew built up his early cinema chain.

The last third of the book, on technology and film exhibition, is correct in its general description of events but not always reliable in its details. For instance, on Technicolor after the advent of Eastman colour, Gomery says that in 1960, Technicolor was "...just another corporation that could process colour film", whereas at that date Technicolor was still making prints with its special dye-inhibition printing process, which was quite different from all other photographic printing processes, and still gave the company an advantage for large print orders. No proper statistics are given for the financial side of film exhibition, for cinema attendance, or for the age and class composition of the audience over the decades. In other words, though this is a useful book, there is still plenty of digging and thinking to be done.

shorts

The Movie Book of Film Noir

Ian Cameron (ed), Cassell/Studio Vista, £16.99, 288pp

With this collection, Studio Vista re-launches its pioneering and influential film list, and marks the thirtieth anniversary of the birth of *Movie* magazine. During the 60s this British journal championed Hollywood against its native cinema, which it criticised for its lack of style and auteurs. The majority of the articles were specially written for this volume, which covers in detail twenty films noirs from the 40s and 50s, and discusses the genre's influence on modern Hollywood.

The Prisoner: A Television Masterpiece

Alain Carvazé and Hélène Oswald, translated by Christine Donougher, Virgin, £12.99, 241pp

Another 60s British phenomenon, the cult television series starring Patrick McGoohan, below, as the man who could not escape, is celebrated in this lavishly produced anthology. Prefaced by an interview with McGoohan and witty pieces by, among others, surrealist Roland Topor and Isaac Asimov, the book provides summaries of the episodes, programme credits, a bibliography and analysis of the innovative aspects of the series. A must for aficionados.



Evolutionary Art and Computers

Stephen Todd and William Latham, Academic Press/Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, £29.95, 224pp

Artist/ animator Latham and computer graphics wizard Todd have worked together for five years exploring the capacity of computer technology to produce virtual sculptures, 'mutations' and other animated forms. They outline their working methods and the programmes and systems they have developed, providing a fascinating introduction to the medium's artistic potential. The book also includes an invaluable glossary of terms, a bibliography and stunning colour plates.

The BBC: 70 Years of Broadcasting

John Cain, BBC Books, £9.95, 160pp

This outline history, written by a former BBC Controller of Public Affairs and directed at a general readership, appears at a vulnerable moment for the corporation. Though it could be seen as a public-relations exercise, it also attempts, in true public-service tradition, to educate and inform about the political background to "the cornerstone of British broadcasting". It includes a comprehensive date list of major events in the BBC's seventy-year history and a fold-out colour chart illustrating key personnel and political events.

REVIEWS

Reviews, synopses and full credits for all the month’s new films and new British TV films

The Bodyguard		
USA 1992		
Director: Mick Jackson		
Certificate	Songs	
15	"I Have Nothing"	
Distributor	by David Foster, Linda	
Warner Bros	Thompson, "Run to	
Production Company	You" by Allan Rich, Jud	
Warner Bros	Friedman, "Queen of	
A Tig production	the Night" by Whitney	
In association with	Houston, LA Reid,	
Kasdan Pictures	Babyface, Daryl	
Producers	Simmons, "I'm Every	
Lawrence Kasdan	Woman" by Nickolas	
Jim Wilson	Ashford, Valerie	
Kevin Costner	Simpson, performed	
Production Associate	by Whitney Houston:	
Sara Spring	"Jesus Loves Me"	
Production Manager	performed by Whitney	
Helen Pollak	Houston, Michele	
Location Manager	Lamar Richards; "It's	
Steph Benseman	Gonna Be a Lovely Day"	
Casting	by Bill Withers, Skip	
Elisabeth Leustig	Scarborough, Robert	
Associate:	Clivilles, David Cole,	
Susan Brown	Tommy Never, Michelle	
Extras:	Visage, performed by	
Central Casting	S.O.U.L. S.Y.S.T.E.M.;	
Cenex	"Waiting for You"	
Assistant Directors	by and performed by	
Albert Shapiro	Kenny G; "I Will Always	
Albert Cho	Love You" by Dolly	
Bryan Dresden	Parton, performed by	
Screenplay	(1) Whitney Houston,	
Lawrence Kasdan	(2) John Doe;	
Director of Photography	"Entertainment	
Andrew Dunn	Tonight" by Michael	
Colour	Mark; "Someday	
Technicolor	(I'm Coming Back)"	
Camera Operators	by Lisa Stansfield, Andy	
Michael Genne	Morris, Ian Devaney,	
B:	performed by Lisa	
Steve Smith	Stansfield; "(What's	
Steadicam Operators	So Funny 'bout)	
P. Scott Sakamoto	Peace Love and	
Stephen St. John	Understanding" by	
Videos	Nick Lowe, performed	
Video Image	by Curtis Stigers;	
Supervisor:	"Trust in Me" by	
David M. Hofflich	Charlie Midnight, Marc	
Technical Supervisor:	Swersky, Francesca	
Stephen G. Howard	Beghe, performed by	
Crew:	Joe Cocker, Sass Jordan;	
Joe Unsinn	"Even If My Heart	
Larry Patoker	Would Break" by	
Kevan Jensen	Franne Golde, Adrian	
Monte Swann	Gurvitz, performed	
Greg Kozikowski	by Kenny G, Aaron	
Scott Giegler	Neville; "Melissa"	
Victor Nelli Jnr	by Gregory Allman,	
Playback Operator	Stephen Alaimo,	
Diana Goodman	performed by	
Graphics	The Allman Brothers;	
Design:	"Walk Away Renee"	
Dayna Lee	by Mike Brown, Tony	
Displays:	Sansone, Bob Calilli,	
Video Image	performed by	
Editor	The Left Banke	
Richard A. Harris	Choreography	
Associate Editor	Sean Cheesman	
Donn Cambern	Costume Design	
Production Designer	Susan Nininger	
Jeffrey Beecroft	Costume Supervisor	
Art Director	Kimberly Guenther	
Wm. Ladd Skinner	Set Costumers	
Set Design	Steve Ellsworth	
Antoinette J. Gordon	Janet Sobel	
Roy Barnes	Make-up Artists	
Set Decorator	Frank Carrisosa	
Lisa Dean	Valli O'Reilly	
Set Dresser	Carrie Angland	
Penelope Stames	Special Make-up Effects	
Special Effects	Thomas R. Burman	
Co-ordinator	Bari Dreiband-Burman	
Burt Dalton	Titles/Opticals	
Special Effects	Pacific Title	
Rodney Byrd	Sound Design	
Eric Rylander	Richard Bryce	
Dale Ettema	Goodman	
Don Meyers	Supervising Sound Editors	
Music	Julia Evershade	
Alan Silvestri	George Simpson	
Music Supervisor	Sound Editors	
Maureen Crowe	Michael J. Benavente	
Music Editors	Warren Hamilton Jnr	
Clif Kohlweck	Dave Whittaker	
Darrell Hall	Dialogue:	
	Howell Gibbens	
	Hugo Weng	

ADR Editor
Joe Dorn
Foley Editors
Mark Pappas
Steve Richardson
Sound Recordist
Richard Bryce
Goodman
Foley Recordist
Linda Corbin
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Robert J. Litt
Greg P. Russell
Elliot Tyson
Foley Artists
Joan Rowe
Katie Rowe
Stunt Co-ordinator
Norman L. Howell
Stunts
Bobby Bass
Brooke Becker
Bill Burton
Jeff Dashnaw
Ousan Elam
Rusty Hendrickson
Henry Kingi
Joel Kramer
Vinita McClennon
Bobby Porter
Walter Scott
Billy Washington
David Webster
Doubles
Kevin Costner:
Norman Howell
Whitney Houston:
Joyce Larkin
Whitney Houston
Body:
Debra Hubbard
Whitney Houston
Dance:
Darlene Dillinger
Kevin Costner Stand-in
Mark Thomason
Animal Trainer
Birds & Animals, Inc
Pilots
Tom Stramat
Helicopter:
Bill Warren
Al Guthery
Film Extracts
Yojimbo (1961)
Metropolis (1926)

Cast
Kevin Costner
Frank Farmer
Whitney Houston
Rachel Marron
Gary Kemp
Sy Spector
Bill Cobbs
Devaney
Ralph Waite
Herb Farmer
Tomas Arana
Portman
Michele Lamar Richards
Nicki
Mike Starr
Tony
Christopher Birt
Henry
DeVaughn Nixon
Fletcher
Gerry Bamman
Ray Court
Joe Urla
Minella
Tony Pierce
Dan
Charles Keating
Klingman

Robert Wuhl
Oscar Host
Debbie Reynolds
Herself
Daniel Tucker Kamin
Thuringer
Ethel Ayler
Emma
Sean Cheesman
Rory
Richard Schiff
Skip Thomas
Chris Connelly
Oscar Arrivals MC
Nathaniel Parker
Clive Healy
Bert Remsen
Rotary President
Donald Hotton
Reverend Hardy
Nita Whitaker
Oscar Singer
Patricia Healy
Blumen Young
Sound Winners
Rob Sullivan
Best Sound Presenter
Jennifer Lyon-Buchanan
Best Song Winner
Stephen Shellen
Tom Huston
Victoria Bass
Woman in Green
Abbey Vine
Ben Shiller
Phil Redrow
Video Director
Joseph Hess
Cuban Husband
Marta Velasco
Cleaning Woman
Joe Unger
Journalist
Gwen Seliger
Rachel's Valet
Susan Traylor
Dress Designer
Pat Van Patten
Woman in Restaurant
Shelley A. Hill
Mother at Restaurant
Amy Lou Dempsey
Little Girl at Restaurant
Rosie Lee Hooks
Thrift Shop Owner
Ken Myles
Robert L. Feist
Sound Technicians
Charles Bazaldua
TV Director
Tracye Logan
Girl on Stairway
Art Spaan
Billy Thomas
Douglas Price
Pantages Assistant
Ellin La Var
Rachel's Hairstylist
Joseph Zabrosky
Skip's Assistant
Rollin Jarrett
Miami Reporter
David M. Morano
Fontainebleau
Barkeeper
Carla Lizzette Mejia
Fontainebleau Maid
Linda Thompson
Academy Member
David Foster
Oscar Conductor
Towanna King
Rachel's Assistant

11,622 feet
129 minutes

After having failed to protect President Reagan from being wounded in an assassination attempt, CIA agent Frank Farmer retires to become a freelance bodyguard. He is approached by a friend, Devaney, to take on black superstar singer-turned-actress Rachel Marron and her young son Fletcher as clients. Marron has been receiving hate mail and there has been an attempt on her life. Farmer is reluctant at first, but he visits Marron at her Beverly Hills home. Though Farmer gets a frosty reception from the Marron entourage – which includes her sister/assistant Nicki and publicist Sy Spector – he decides to take on the job. Marron makes it clear that she finds his presence intrusive. Against Farmer’s advice, Marron makes an appearance at a new LA nightclub, where she opens a death threat letter. Later, during her act, she is mobbed and Farmer rescues her. She decides to co-operate with him.

Marron asks Farmer out on a date, and they end up in bed. The following morning, Marron is upset when Farmer tells her that their relationship can only be professional. Farmer accompanies Marron to Miami where she is giving a concert. At a party, Marron flirts with Portman, an old buddy of Farmer’s from his CIA days. Portman makes a pass at the star and is ejected. The following day, Marron receives a death threat phone call. Farmer decides to take Marron, Fletcher, Nicki and the chauffeur to his father’s home in the remote countryside. One night, Nicki attempts unsuccessfully to seduce Farmer. The following day, Fletcher is rescued by Farmer when the boat he is playing on explodes. That night, Nicki confesses to Farmer that, out of jealousy, she hired a hit man to kill her sister. Later that night, Nicki is mistaken for Marron and murdered by an armed intruder. Farmer contacts the police in LA and discovers that they have arrested the obsessive fan who has been stalking Marron. Marron, who has been nominated for an Academy Award, decides to return to LA to attend the ceremony with Farmer as protection. Behind the scenes, Farmer bumps into Portman. Later, as Marron goes on stage to



Invisible race: Whitney Houston

collect her award, Farmer realises that Portman is the assassin. He dives in front of Marron to save her, and is wounded. A couple of weeks after the incident, Farmer goes to the airport to say goodbye to Marron, who is off on tour. As her plane is about to take off, she disembarks and runs back to Farmer.

In the final scene of *The Bodyguard*, a priest gives his blessing to a rotary club dinner. He talks about the protection offered by the beatific Bodyguard on high, while the camera focuses on Frank Farmer standing discreetly behind him. It is a measure of the film's portentousness and ludicrous plotting that it makes this connection between God and Kevin Costner. With *Field of Dreams*, *Dances with Wolves* and *JFK*, Costner has become a champion of the American Way, demonstrating that the ordinary Jims, Johns or Franks are capable of sublime and, in this instance, sacrificial goodness. At one point, Frank Farmer even gives Rachel Marron a little cross fitted with an alarm device allowing her to contact him at any time. Farmer may not walk on water, but he plunges into its chilly depths to save a child, hoping to redeem himself from bungling the security on the Reagan assassination attempt.

This professional guardian angel might have flown straight out of scenarist's Lawrence Kasdan's *Grand Canyon*. That movie's preoccupation with a decadent Los Angeles is evident here. Marron's Beverly Hills mansion is a Babylonian extravaganza iced with MTV gloss. She inhabits an opulent world of night-club openings, charity benefits and award ceremonies that makes Farmer feel uncomfortable, even though he is fascinated by it. In his ascetic, sparsely furnished apartment, the only ornament is a samurai sword (he has seen Kurosawa's *Yojimbo* sixty-two times). Farmer's rigorous moral code makes him appear cold; but like his snow-covered, timbered rural retreat, there is a fire burning inside. Conversely, Marron's soul is not completely sold to the 'life styles of the rich and famous' junket. A gilded boudoir has been specially built for photo opportunities, but her real bedroom is a cosy, intimate hideaway.

Thematically, *The Bodyguard* borrows from *Someone to Watch Over Me*, but without that film's love triangle. However, it is their different life styles rather than class or ethnic problems that divide Farmer and Marron. Whereas in *Jungle Fever*, for example, the romance between a black man and a white woman was the central issue, in this mainstream production the question of race is rendered invisible. Reportedly, Kevin Costner personally ordained that the singer Whitney Houston should play Marron, believing that she had the makings of a great actress. Unfortunately, she is ill served by flimsy characterisation and the total lack of chemistry between herself and Costner.

Lizzie Francke

C'est arrivé près de chez vous (Man Bites Dog)

Belgium 1992

Directors: Rémy Belvaux, André Bonzel, Benoît Poelvoorde

Certificate	Cast
18	Benoît Poelvoorde
Distributor	Ben Patard
Metro Pictures	Jacqueline Poelvoorde-Pappaert
Production Company	Ben's Grandmother
Les Artistes Anonymes	Nelly Pappaert
Producers	Ben's Grandfather
Rémy Belvaux	Jenny Drye
André Bonzel	Jenny
Benoît Poelvoorde	Malou Madou
Production Manager	Malou
Vincent Tavier	Willy Vandenbroeck
Assistant Director	Boby
Vincent Tavier	Rachel Deman
Screenplay	Mamie Tromblon
Rémy Belvaux	André Laime
André Bonzel	Bed-ridden Old Man
Benoît Poelvoorde	Edith Lemerdy
Vincent Tavier	Nurse
Based on an original idea by Rémy Belvaux	Sylviane Gode
Director of Photography	Zoltan Tobolik
André Bonzel	Violinists
Editors	Valérie Parent
Rémy Belvaux	Valérie
Eric Dardill	Alexandra Fandango
Special Effects	Kalifa
Bertrand Boudaud	Oliver Cotica
Oliver De Lavelaye	Benichou
Music	Rémy Belvaux
Jean-Marc Chenut	Reporter
Make-up	André Bonzel
Benedicte Lescalier	Cameraman
Sound Editors	Jean-Marc Chenut
Franco Piscopo	Patrick
Clotilde François	Alain Oppezz
Sound Recordists	Franco
Alain Oppezz	Vincent Tavier
Vincent Tavier	Vincent
Clotilde François	Gina Cotica
Franco Piscopo	Mother
Sound Re-recordists	Ricardo Cotica
Franco Piscopo	Child
Clotilde François	Pierre Vanbraekel
Production Assistant	Father
Annamaria	Marcel Engels
Szomolanyova	Cameraman
	Franco Piscopo
	Sound Recordist
	Alain François
	Reporter
	Venelin Proikov
	Fernaudo Dubois
	Postmen
	Antoine Chapelot
	Wine Waiter
	Hugues Tavier
	Buffet Waiter
	Pol Vanderwarren
	Lawyer
	Anne Lagrange
	Journalist
	Paul Bottemanne
	Taxi-driver
	Vincent Merveille
	Boxer
	Irene Gilissen
	Lady on Train
	Sabine Tavier
	Madame Pipi
	Annamaria Szomolanyiova
	Violinist
	Carlos Campo Miranda
	Night Watchman

8,632 feet
96 minutes

In the provincial Belgian town of Namur, multiple killer Ben Patard demonstrates his techniques for documentary film-maker Rémy Belvaux, cameraman André, and soundman Patrick. In his daily wanderings, Ben uses a wide range of murder methods, selecting victims impartially but with a special preference for postmen. Sharing his experiences with the film crew, he proves also to be a poet and philosopher, offering guidance on everything from architecture to personal hygiene. Learning that Rémy lacks financial backing, he insists on covering the film's production costs from his own ample income.

He introduces the unit to his mother and grandparents, who jointly run a general store, to his girlfriend Valérie, who plays the flute to Ben's piano accompaniment, and to other friends like Jenny, a prostitute, Malou, who runs a bar, and Bobby, a boxing trainer. At first doubtful about Ben's activities, particularly when he kills an old lady in a tower block, Rémy and the unit are caught in an exchange of fire between Ben and another gunman, in which Patrick is killed. Distraught, Rémy vows that filming must go on in tribute to Patrick, and a new soundman, Franco, is employed. Asked by Rémy why he doesn't concentrate on prosperous suburban households, Ben attacks one such family to illustrate the drawbacks: the child of the house is difficult to suppress (Rémy has to help), and the haul is just a few credit cards.

While Ben is showing the crew around a derelict mansion where he hides his profits, they are ambushed and Franco is killed. After a chase, Ben shoots down the intruder, whom he identifies as Ricardo Giovanni, a member of the Tavier gang. He also kills off a rival film crew, who have been making a documentary about Giovanni. Filming resumes with another soundman, Vincent, and on one drunken evening around Christmas, they all join in the rape and murder of a girl, Martine, and her partner. Valérie and Ben's mother receive death threats from the Tavier gang, but Ben refuses to take these seriously. While training in the boxing ring, he is knocked flat

by his opponent and spends some time in hospital.

His return home is celebrated with a birthday party given by Valérie, Jenny, and Bobby; the film crew presents him with a gun holster, and Ben tests it by drawing his gun and shooting Bobby in one movement. Helping to dispose of the body, the film crew find that the remains of Ben's other victims have been uncovered; despite hasty reburial, the evidence leads to Ben's imprisonment on a murder charge. He quickly escapes and summons Rémy and the crew to rejoin him, but finds that Valérie and his mother have been murdered by the Taviors. Returning to the mansion hideout to collect fresh funds, Ben, Rémy, André and Vincent are shot down by unknown assailants.

With its piecemeal structure (the by-no-means unhelpful result of a two-and-a-half-year shooting schedule: when funds or free film stock were available, they shot another scene or two), *Man Bites Dog* is a wonderfully ramshackle portrait not just of the charismatic Ben but also of the would-be film-maker Rémy who falls under his spell. Quickly established as a monster of awesome proportions, Ben has little room for subsequent development (he mostly gets worse) whereas Rémy, a dishevelled figure on the edge of Ben's dark trajectory, gradually assumes the role of instigator and accomplice. It is even tempting, for the penultimate scenes in an unexpected wilderness of snowy roads and frozen trees (more Delvaux than Belvaux at this juncture), to consider him as judge and executioner, conveying Ben to a final appointment and a shared death – although Ben is the one to insist on a poetry recital before the last hail of bullets.

Amid the uncertainty with which one event follows another in the film, there is an early, significant gulf: Ben suggests a meal to the film crew who, void of appetite after what they've just experienced, nervously turn him down. He wanders off, while a shame-faced Rémy fidgets in the road – and in the next shot they are all sitting around a table. The change of heart, unexplained for a complexity of ►



An ingratiating brutality: Benoît Poelvoorde

◄ reasons – the simplest being that the camera didn’t happen to be on at the time – prepares the way for all subsequent forays in which the film crew meekly assist Ben in his labours. These include such tasks as catching and holding down a child that Ben is trying to stifle (complaining the while that there’s no profit in infanticide) or, in a scene so bleakly disgusting that the giggles come in self-defence, picking at various grisly remains in a mud pit while Ben hurls insults from a safe distance.

This is humour of a Pythonesque extreme, rescuing its audience from stunned revulsion not only by the absurdity of Ben’s career but also by being a patently fake ‘documentary’ from the moment the first victim is strangled without a glance at the camera hovering in front of her (by contrast with a later postman who asks if he’s on television just before Ben pounces on him). Full of amiable puzzles, the film scatters Ben’s victims around in such quantity that the most persistent question, adding to the fun, must be how he gets away with it for so long. A car chase in pursuit of another gunman seems to be part of an underworld feud about which, uncharacteristically, Ben has little to say, although it leads to his downfall – and it seems odd that the Tavieres (assuming that they are indeed his nemesis) make no attempt to move the corpse of their henchman, left for weeks where Ben felled him.

But the real joke, justifying the invention of the unseen Tavier gang and their unpleasant habit of skewering rats, is of course that the actor Vincent Tavier (playing one of Rémy’s disposable soundmen) is the last to get shot, after co-writing the script and, like most of the team, filling out a whole range of production roles. This is a family affair, bargain-basement indulgence of the *Wayne’s World* kind, with space for Ben’s (real) family to crack their usual jokes and for his roguish grandfather to hustle for drinks while telling gleeful tales of his own misspent youth.

Although the spectres presiding over this feast of horrors are those fashionably raised by the latest spate of urban-psycho movies, the figure of Ben – unlike, say, the serial-killer Henry, who is malevolently straight-faced – has the ingratiating brutality of Richard III as played by Robert De Niro. Performed by Benoît Poelvoorde with a venomous and self-congratulatory charm, he is fully the contemporary villain, his conceit unhampered by pity or remorse, unless it be over a killing that could have been more efficient – in which case, Rémy and his spotlights are usually to blame. His attacks on the dull streets and compliant citizens of his home-town have a flamboyance and bravado with which it is wincingly easy to sympathise. Thanks to him, to encounter *Man Bites Dog* is to submit to a torrent of hilariously cruel humour, enacted without fuss or rancour, and inconceivably authentic.

Philip Strick

Chaplin	
United Kingdom 1992	
Director: Richard Attenborough	
Certificate 12	Set Decorators LA: Chris A. Butler
Distributor Guild	London: Stephanie McMillan
Production Company Lambeth Productions For Carolco/ Le Studio Canal +	Set Dressers Adam Braff Sara Gardner Douglas M. Vaughn
Executive-in-charge of Production Terence Clegg	Draughtsman Jim Morahan
Producers Richard Attenborough Mario Kassar	Scenic Artist Brian Bishop
Co-producer Terence Clegg	Storyboard Artist Martin Asbury
Associate Producer Diana Hawkins	Special Effects Supervisor David Harris
Production Associate Alison Webb	Special Effects Co-ordinator Alan E. Lorimer
Production Co-ordinators LA: Gina Fortunato	Special Effects Paul Stewart Paul Obest
London: Leila Kirkpatrick	James Lorimer
Unit Production Managers Chris Coles	Music/Music Director John Barry
London: Basil Somner	Music Extracts "Violin Concerto in D"
Unit Manager Sandor Van Orosz	by Ludwig van Beethoven; "The Enigma Variations"
Location Managers LA: Elizabeth Matthews	by Edward Elgar
London: Nick Daubeny	Orchestrations Nic Raine
Richard Dunmore	Music Supervisor Robin Glenn
Vevey: Allan James	Music Editor Andrew Glen
2nd Unit Manager Micky Moore	Songs "The Honeysuckle and the Bee" by Albert Fitz, William Penn; "Any Old Iron" by Charles Collins, E.A. Sheppard, Fred Terry; "Daisy Bell"
Casting Mike Fenton Valorie Massalas Susie Figgis	by Harry Dacre; "I Dreamt I Dwelt in Marble Halls" by Alfred Bunn, Michael Balle; "When the Moon Shines Bright on Charlie Chaplin" by Kerry Mills, Thurland Challaway, Edward Stanning; "America the Beautiful" by K. L. Bates, Samuel Ward; "Don't Dilly Dally on the Way" by Charles Collins, Fred Leigh; "Violetera" by José Padilla; "Poor Butterfly" by Raymond Hubbell, John Golden; "Tiger Rag" by The Original Dixieland Jazz Band; "When Johnny Comes Marching Home" by Patrick S. Gillmore; "Champagne Charlie" by A. Lee, G. Leybourne, performed by The Royal Artillery Band; "Please" by Leo Robin, Ralph Rainger; "Smoke Gets in Your Eyes" by Otto Harbach, Jerome Kern; "Theme from <i>Modern Times</i> ", "Music from <i>City Lights</i> ", "Theme from <i>Limelight</i> " by Charles Chaplin
Co-ordinator: Amy Allen-Clegg	Choreography LA: Susanne McKenrick
Assistant Directors David Tomblin Lee Cleary Peter C. Graupner	London: Kate Flatt
LA 2nd Unit: Pat Regan	Chaplin Choreography LA: Dan Kamin
London: Patrick Kinney Kate Hazell	London: Johnny Hutch
Screenplay William Boyd Bryan Forbes William Goldman	Costume Design John Mollo Ellen Mirojnick
Story Diana Hawkins Based on the books <i>My Autobiography</i> by Charles Chaplin, <i>Chaplin – His Life and Art</i> by David Robinson	
Director of Photography Sven Nykvist	
Colour Technicolor	
2nd Unit Photography Alex Witt	
Camera Operator Kevin Jewison	
Special Visual Effects Syd Dutton Bill Taylor	
Illusion Arts Inc.	
Optical Printing Dave Docwra	
Graphic Design Frameline	
Editor Anne V. Coates	
Production Designer Stuart Craig	
Art Directors Supervisor: Norman Dorme	
LA: Mark Mansbridge	
London: John King	
Set Design Stan Tropp Don Woodruff	

Costume Supervisors
Key:
Michael Dennison
Women:
Deborah Hopper
Men: Anthony Scarano
Wardrobe
Master:
Kenny Crouch
Mistress:
Lisa Johnson
Costume Department
Co-ordinator
James Michael Hargate
Costumers
LA: Cheryl Beasley
Blackwell
James P. Cullen
Make-up Supervisor
Wally Schneiderman
Key Make-up
Jill Rockow
Make-up Artists
LA: Ron Berkeley
Monty Westmore
London: Pauline Heys
Beryl Lerman
Charlie Chaplin Prosthetic
Ageing Make-up
John Caglione Jnr
Douglas Fairbanks
Prosthetics
Bob Laden
Titles/Opticals
Peter Watson
Associates Peter Govey
Sound Editors
Jonathan Bates
Dialogue:
Mike Crouch
ADR Editor
Ian Fuller
Foley Editor
Peter Holt
Sound Recordists
Edward Tise
Music:
Shawn Murphy
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Gerry Humphreys
Dean Humphreys
John Wolstenholme
ADR: John Bateman
Advisers
Technical:
Marc Wannamaker
Stunt:
Andy Bradford
Consultants
Historical:
David Robinson
Visual:
Albert Whitlock
Production Assistants
Trey Batchelor
Sean Corrigan
Steve Cowie
Nancy Cox
Jill Du Deck
Aaron Garcia
Susan Guski
Kris Lindquist
David Clayton Miller
David O'Shaughnessy
Lisa Schectman
Stunt Co-ordinators
UK:
Peter Brace
US:
Joe Dunne
Stunts
Keith Campbell
Dan Darringer
Margarite Happy

Dan McCaan
John Mojo
Philip Riniono
George Marshall Ruge
Neil Summers
Jim Wilkey
Brian Williams
Film Extracts
The Kid (1921)
The Gold Rush (1925)
The Circus (1928)
City Lights (1931)
Modern Times (1936)
The Great Dictator (1940)

Cast
Robert Downey Jnr
Charles Chaplin
Dan Aykroyd
Mack Sennett
Geraldine Chaplin
Hannah Chaplin
Kevin Dunn
J. Edgar Hoover
Anthony Hopkins
George Hayden
Milla Jovovich
Mildred Harris
Moira Kelly
Hetty Kelly/
Oona O'Neill
Kevin Kline
Douglas Fairbanks
Diane Lane
Paulette Goddard
Penelope Ann Miller
Edna Purviance
Paul Rhys
Sydney Chaplin
John Thaw
Fred Karno
Marisa Tomei
Mabel Normand
Nancy Travis
Joan Barry
James Woods
Lawyer Scott
Hugh Downer
Charlie, age 5
Tom Bradford
Charlie, age 14
Nicholas Gatt
Sydney, age 9
Bill Paterson
Stage Manager
Anthony Bowles
Conductor
Bryan Coleman
Drunk
Howard "Lew" Lewis
P. H. Moriarty
Workhouse Officials
Brian Lipson
Alan Ford
Warders
Liz Porter
Matchgirl
Ultan Ely-O'Carroll
Rummy Binks
Marcus Eyre
Policeman
Anwar Adaoui
Ben Bilson
Matthew Cartwright
Ian Covington
Adam Goodwin
Milly Gregory
Sam Holland
Josh Maguire
Daniel Sherman
Luke Strain
Frankie Sullivan
Lambeth Kids
Karen Salt
Little Girl

Gerald Sim
Doctor
Una Brandon-Jones
Audrey Leybourne
Inmates
Graham Sinclair
Master of Ceremonies
Karen Lewis
Andree Bernard
Carole Jahme
Jacqueline Leonard
Claire Perriam
Theresa Petts
Yankee Doodle Dancers
David Gant
Maitre d'
Mary Healey
Mrs Karno
Malcolm Terris
Stallholder
Phil Brown
Projectionist
Matthew Cottle
Stan Laurel
Ena Baga
Pianist
David Duchovny
Rollie Totheroh
Mario Govoni
Swiss Butler
David Mooney
Wedding Photographer
C. J. Golden
Bride's Mother
Raymond Lynch
Bride's Father
Peter Georges
Groom
Mike Randleman
Groom's Mother
Mike Peluso
Groom's Father
Caroline Cornell
Ann Fairlie
Paul Hayes
Denis Vero
Wedding Guests
Francesca Buller
Minnie Chaplin
NickCorello
Masseur
Richard Fast
Bronco Billy Anderson
Maria Pitillo
Mary Pickford
Brad Parker
Party Photographer
Yoshio Be
Chauffeur
Peter Crook
Frank Hooper
David Totheroh
Jack Totheroh
Cameramen
Jack Ritschel
William Randolph
Hearst
Heather McNair
Marion Davies
Laura Bastianelli
Joy Clausen
Paul Bruno Grenier
MaryKate Harris
Charles Howerton
Jason Logan
Renata Scott
Mike Villani
Dinner Guests
Jerry Jensen
Hotel Porter
Larry Randolph
Waiter
Alan Charoff
Dana Craig

Kennedy Grant
Ken Magee
Federal Marshalls
BenWhitrow
Station Master
Edward Crangle
Young Autograph
Hunter
Stuart Richman
Mark Vegh
Barmen
Caroline Guthrie
Lawrence Lambert
Courting Couple
Robert Stephens
Ted the Drunk
Tim Chaplin
Nick Edmett
David Finch
Mark Long
Tommy Wright
Workingmen
Leonard Kirby
Young Fan
Sean O'Bryan
Lewis Seeley
Deborah Maria Moore
Lita Grey
Donald Elson
Prop Man
Donnie Kehr
Sound Engineer
Sky Rumph
Charles Chaplin Jnr,
age 7
Bradley Pierce
Sydney Chaplin Jnr,
age 6
Richard James
Pianist
William Dennis Hunt
American Maitre d'
Michael Blevins
David Raksin
Norbet Weisser
German Diplomat
Vicki Frederick
Gene Wolande
Michael Adler
Iris Bath
Thomas K. Belgrey
Tom Preston
Mary Stark
Annie Waterman
Party Guests
Noah Margetts
Clapper Boy
Jodi Carlisle
Script Girl
Rhett Smith
Tennis Party Guest
John Standing
Chaplin Butler
Michael Goorjian
Charles Chaplin Jnr
Michael Cade
Sydney Chaplin Jnr
Todd Mason Covert
Phil Forman
Charley J. Garrett
Jerry Giles
Howard Hughes
Jayson Kane
Michael Miller
John Otrin
J. Michael Patterson
Paul Sinclair
Terence Stone
Ralph Votrian
Reporters
Emma Lewis
Production Assistant

13,035 feet
145 minutes



Gruesomely confident: Hugh Downer

● In Vevey, Switzerland, the ageing Charles Chaplin goes back over his life with biographer George Hayden... Aldershot, 1894: Five-year-old Charles takes over when his mother, Hannah, a music-hall singer, dries up during a performance; in London, the impoverished Hannah is unable to provide for Charles and his brother Sydney and they are sent to the workhouse. In 1908, Syd gets Charlie an audition with his employer, the music-hall impresario Fred Karno; Charlie joins the company and specialises in a 'drunken toff' routine. He meets and proposes to showgirl Hetty Kelly, although he is soon to leave on a tour of America. In 1913, in Butte, Montana, he is enthralled by a moving-picture show, and receives an invitation to join Mack Sennett's Keystone Film Company.

Sennett initiates him in the mysteries of film, but Charlie feels under-used and fails to hit it off with Sennett's girlfriend and star Mabel Normand, who is herself directing. After inventing the figure of the Tramp, and proving his skill as a comic improviser, Chaplin persuades Sennett to let him direct. Syd arrives from England, and tells Charlie that Hetty has already married. Syd takes over the affairs of his now immensely popular brother, and Chaplin leaves Sennett. In a restaurant, Charlie discovers Edna Purviance, who is to be his co-star. Syd expresses disapproval of the satirical slant of Charlie's film *The Immigrant*. At a party held by Douglas Fairbanks, Charlie meets the sixteen-year-old actress Mildred Harris, whom he marries in 1918 after she becomes pregnant.

At a dinner, Charlie has a run-in with the xenophobic J. Edgar Hoover. In 1920, Mildred leaves him, and in a dispute over his assets, his current film *The Kid* is to be seized. Chaplin and his entourage flee to Salt Lake City to edit the film in a hotel room. Hannah, who has been in an asylum for some years, joins her sons in the US, but her mental state is still fragile. In 1921, Charlie returns to London, where Karno tells him that Hetty has died of flu. He is generally fêted, except by those who resent his being in America during the war. Back in Hollywood, new threats await him: Hoover's FBI is investigating suspected Communists, and talkies have arrived. Charlie undertakes a second unsuccessful marriage, to the young actress Lita Grey. In 1932, he meets Paulette Goddard, née Levy, who becomes his third wife.

Charlie's social conscience stirs him to make *Modern Times*, but his obsessive work habits alienate Paulette. His Hitler parody, *The Great Dictator*, is ill-received, and prompts further FBI scrutiny. After an ill-fated liaison with the unstable Joan Barry, Charlie meets the young actress Oona O'Neill in 1942, who becomes his wife and lasting companion. Joan Barry brings a paternity suit against him; in spite of a negative blood test, the trial goes on, and Chaplin is made to pay maintenance. Accusations of Communism continue, and Chaplin is booed at the première of his



Man and mask: Marisa Tomei, Robert Downey Jr

Limelight. As the HUAC hearings begin, Chaplin leaves to visit Britain in 1952, only to find that he has been thrown out of the US. In 1972, however, he is honoured in the Academy Awards.

● Chaplin begins with the familiar (and copyrighted) figure of the Little Tramp silhouetted in a doorway, and a credit sequence that shows Charlie – in the familiar shot from *Limelight* – removing his clown's make-up, as the screen fades from monochrome to colour. The implication is that we are going to see Chaplin with the mask off, even though what we know we are going to see is the hitherto anonymous Robert Downey Jr masked as Chaplin. In fact, Downey's creditable if unspectacular performance – blank diffidence tempered with Cockney cockiness – is probably the perfect vehicle for the portrayal of the first man in film to merge so thoroughly with his mask that no one – including, it is suggested, himself – could know who he really was.

Chaplin moves uneasily between a 'definitive version' reconstruction of the life and a tentative unpicking of the myth. It begins with a mildly kitsch evocation of Chaplin's childhood – his gruesomely confident upstaging of his mother (played with unnerving aptness by her own granddaughter), a workhouse chase that rather too knowingly prefigures the Keystone Kops, and a grim vista of Lambeth poverty that, although it never errs on the side of scenic nostalgia, is nevertheless as Dickensian as it comes ("Sorry", says Hannah, "it's only fish-heads again, darling"). With the move to Vevey, the ageing Chaplin (Downey embalmed in grotesquely unconvincing latex) is revealed to be a highly par-

tial and unreliable memoirist. But the interventions of the fictional biographer George Hayden make only slight dents in the coherence of Chaplin's story. The film never goes the whole hog and comes out as a psychoanalytic narrative, which essentially it is.

At one stage, Hayden points out that Chaplin's downfall was caused by sex. This is true enough, perhaps, in the liaisons with Grey, Barry and Harris – and a moment in the last one shows Charlie propped up in bed, clearly a helpless captive to her still pubescent charms. But we then move on to what appears to be the perfect opportunity for sexual and emotional fulfilment, the marriage with Goddard, and then it is workaholicism that proves the destructive factor. The speed with which the narrative shuffles the women in Chaplin's life reinforces the impression of his inability to see them as anything other than interchangeable appendages – or, considering that Hannah is by far the strongest female presence in the film, as mother substitutes.

The sketchiness of the telling is to do with the fact that when you take on Chaplin, you take on the century – at least insofar as it is imagined as a function of cinema. This seems to have been something that dogged Chaplin himself. As he rehearses his *Great Dictator* to the accompaniment of Hitler newsreels, he says, "I know this man – we were born the same year. He's like me, capable of anything". The film plays neither on the ironies of this parallel, nor on the oddness of Chaplin himself noticing it (although Fairbanks remarks, "I think he stole your act – Adolf, I mean"). In fact, it generally takes for granted Chaplin's primacy in the myth of the century, but

also bemoans the unfortunate ways in which he collided unhappily with historical contingencies: the wars, the Depression, the rise of McCarthyism. This Chaplin is a man at once of his age, and an outcast from it: a tension in which, it suggests, his greatness lies.

What *Chaplin* is not, perhaps fortunately, is particularly funny. Downey excels in reconstructions of the 'drunken toff' turn and in a wedding party skit at Sennett's. Lively as these are, they come across slightly as well-oiled sideshow pieces in a grand historical tableau. The other pleasures of the film come from the star turns: Dan Aykroyd's acerbic Sennett, complete with outsize megaphone and resonant spittoon; Mabel Normand as the latest in Marisa Tomei's line of sassy broads; Kevin Kline getting his inevitable swashbuckler role as Fairbanks; and an array of British dependables in minor parts (Robert Stephens as a drunk, a barely visible Benjamin Whitrow).

The pattern in the tapestry – Chaplin himself – is missing, and the film admits this from the opening silhouette. "If you want to understand me", Chaplin tells Hayden, "watch my movies". In the end, in its only really sentimental moment, the film does just that, as the Academy guest of honour sits in the dark dwarfed by a montage of his clips on screen. The film finally opts for a rather obvious explanation of the Chaplin enigma: it's no great revelation to have it suggested that the tragic Lambeth boy and Jackie Coogan's urchin in *The Kid* are one and the same. But it's the only crass touch to a film that is always watchable, and always manages to stay the right side of hagiography. Whether this is the proper Charlie is another question.

Jonathan Romney

Conte d'hiver

(A Winter's Tale)

France 1992

Director: Eric Rohmer

Certificate	Cast
12	Charlotte Very
Distributor	Félicie
Artificial Eye	Frederic Van Den Driessche
Production Company	Charles
Les Films du Losange	Michel Voletti
With the participation	Maxence
of Soficas/Investimage/	Hervé Furic
Sofiarp	Loïc
With assistance from	Ava Loraschi
Le Studio Canal +	Elise
Producer	Christiane Desbois
Margaret Menegoz	Mother
Production Manager	Rosette
Françoise Etchegaray	Sister
Screenplay	Jean-Luc Revol
Eric Rohmer	Brother-in-Law
Directors of Photography	Haydee Caillot
Luc Pages	Edwige
The Winter's Tale:	Jean-Claude Biette
Maurice Giraud	Quentin
Editor	Marie Rivière
Mary Stephen	Dora
Music	The Winter's Tale:
Sébastien Erms	Roger Dumas
Costume Design	Leontes
The Winter's Tale:	Daniele Lebrun
Pierre-Jean Larroque	Paulina
Sound Editor	Diane Lepvrier
Pascal Ribier	Hermione
Sound Recordist	Edwig Navarro
Jean-Pierre Laforce	Perdita
	François Rauscher
	Florizel
	Eric Wapler
	Gaston Richard
	Lords
	Maria Coin
	Flute Player

10,278 feet
114 minutes

After an idyllic summer with Charles, whom she meets on holiday in Brittany shortly before he goes to work in the US, Félicie accidentally loses touch with him. Five years later, having given birth to his daughter, Elise, she works as a hairdresser in a Paris suburb, clinging to the hope that somehow she and Charles will meet again. She is courted by a librarian, Loïc, with whom she lives when not visiting her mother, who looks after Elise; at the same time, she is having an affair with her employer, Maxence, who has taken over a new beauty salon in Nevers and wants Félicie to join him. Accepting an invitation to visit him just before Christmas, she is charmed by Nevers and by Maxence's acceptance of her dedication to Charles, and decides to move.

Back in Paris, she breaks the news to her mother, who doubts the wisdom of it, and then to Loïc, after a dinner party he has unexpectedly arranged with two friends, Edwige and Quentin. He is angry and upset, but they part on friendly terms.

On arrival in Nevers on the day after Christmas, Félicie finds speedy disillusionment. Maxence is attentive, but his business takes priority, and any time Félicie takes to look after Elise causes problems. Unhappy in her new surroundings, Elise demands attention; Félicie takes her for a walk and they visit the cathedral where, with sudden insight, she realises they must leave

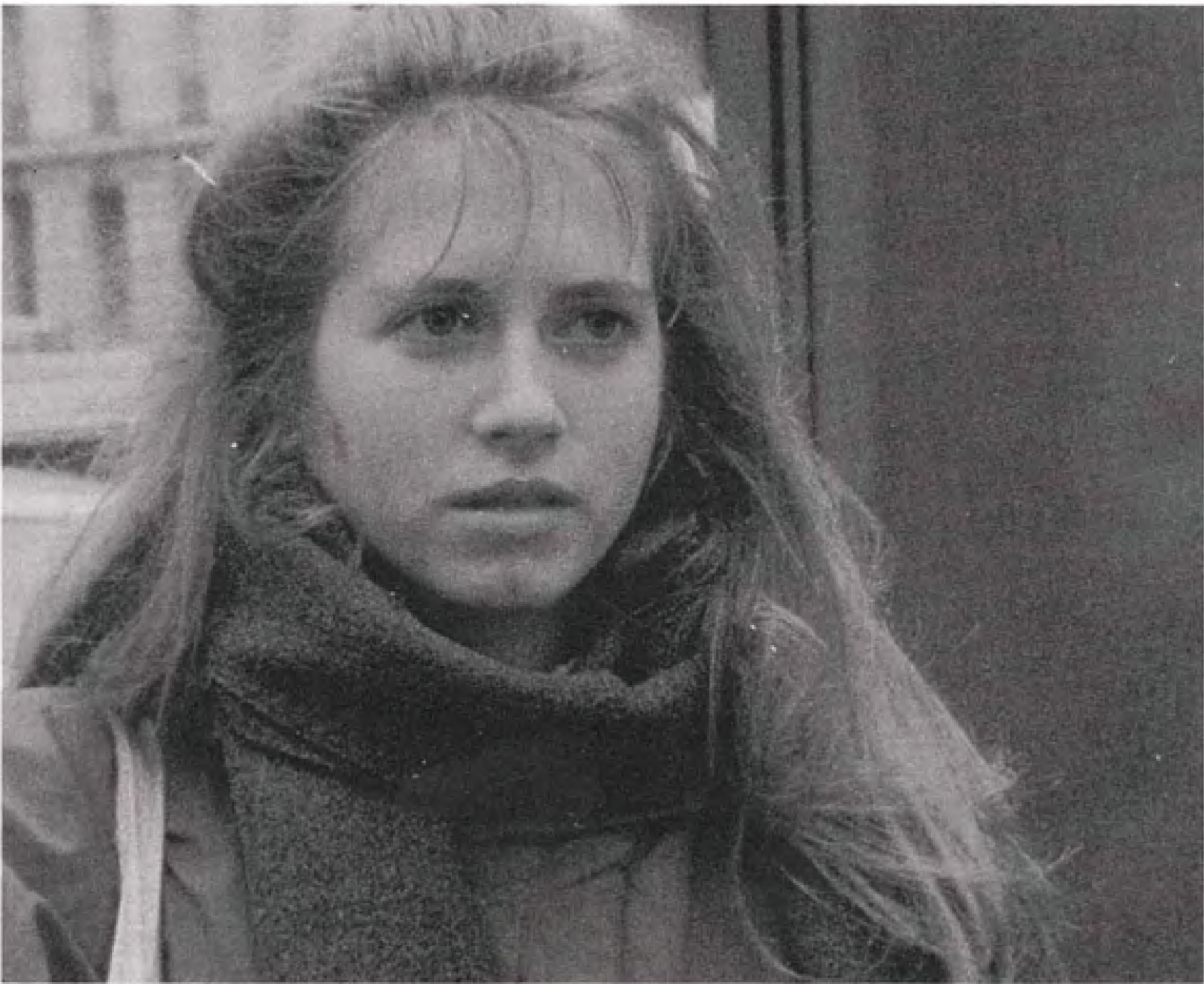
immediately while a clean break is still possible.

Apologising to the astonished Maxence, she returns to her mother in Paris, lines up a new job, and visits Loïc at his library. Welcoming her back, although she refuses to move in with him, he invites her to the Théâtre Gérard Philippe that evening to see Shakespeare's *The Winter's Tale*. Félicie is greatly moved by the final scene, which she interprets as an affirmation of her own faith that Charles will be returned to her. Amused by and resigned to her continuing obsession, Loïc persuades her to bring Elise for the weekend, and they spend a contented couple of days sightseeing among the festive crowds.

Loïc wants her to join him and his family for their New Year party, but Félicie refuses to risk giving the impression that they are anything more than friends. On New Year's Eve, after some window-shopping, she and Elise catch the bus for home; they realise that the man in the opposite seat is Charles, who recognises Félicie in the same instant. In a panic that his companion, Dora, must be his wife, Félicie gets off at the next stop, but Charles follows. He explains that Dora is only a friend, that he is unattached, and that Félicie has been all that ever mattered. Joyfully they go home to Felicie's astonished mother, determined never to be separated again.

Taking his cue from Shakespeare, Rohmer tells a 'winter's tale' both in the sense of it being a tall story and as the exploration of a frozen emotional solstice. Where Shakespeare, in what was one of his Last Plays, balances the dark despair of his drama's first half against the restoration of light and hope in its second in distant variation on the Greek myth of Ceres and Proserpina, Rohmer too, now in his 70s, studies the gulf between a lost summer and the promise – if not quite the springtime – of a new year. Carefully described in the screenplay as a yarn in which “lots of fantastic things happen”, and in the play itself as “so like an old tale that the verity of it is in strong suspicion”, *The Winter's Tale* in Rohmer's translation turns out to be an intricate account of accident and coincidence that dares to the full the disbelief of its audience.

Including an extract from Shakespeare's final scene in his film, Rohmer has admitted to some amendment. It is the moment when Leontes, whose wife has been hidden from him for sixteen years following a burst of unjustified jealousy on his part, is presented with her 'statue' (actually the lady in person) which 'magically' comes to life before his grateful eyes. Accentuating the miraculous aspect of this event, rather than its dependence (in the Shakespearean comic tradition) on game-playing and gullibility, Rohmer tailors the reincarnation to suit the confidence of Félicie who, weeping in the audience, takes it to mean that her faith in her own lost love will be rewarded – that, in effect, the portrait



Woman on the move: Charlotte Very

of her vanished partner, Charles, will similarly resume a living form. And so it does, in that he is immediately recognised by the daughter he has never met, thanks to the framed photograph that has always stood in her nursery.

What Félicie does not remark on is the scene's other subject, a regular Shakespearean text about reconciliations between children and parents – here specifically between daughter and mother. This theme has taken an erratic course through Rohmer's own work, in which single parents are customary, and substitute fathers are in considerable demand. In *Conte d'hiver*, the hunt for reunion is not a matter of Félicie rediscovering her mother, who (as with the mother in *Le Beau Mariage*) is tolerantly resigned to getting an earful whenever she offers advice, but that of reconstructing a family unit for the sake of Elise, daughter to Félicie and the missing Charles.

The film is in fact about three trial partnerships – with Maxence, with Loïc and with Charles – and in all three, Elise plays the decisive role, even though Félicie does most of the talking. Based as it is on the exchange of anecdotes between the characters, to which Elise herself contributes several rambling fragments, the fairy-tale nature of the quest (king, queen and princess strive for perpetual partnership) develops with an appealing logic from Elise's insistence on seeing the Nativity crib in the cathedral, to a series of encounters with puppets and toys, and her ride on the white charger of a fairground carousel.

The cause of all the trouble is what Rohmer generously terms a 'lapse' on Félicie's part, when she gives Charles the wrong address (or rather, the right address – for Victor Hugo could never be inappropriate – but in the wrong part of Paris). “I have no explanation for this”, says Rohmer, and builds some clumsy support for the mistake by having Félicie corrected for a couple of mild malapropisms – she has a habit, she admits, of mixing up her words. Interviewed in *Cahiers du Cinéma* (February 1992), Rohmer avoids the most

obvious explanations: that Félicie gets the address wrong because, subconsciously, she wishes to put their love to the test, or – in keeping with Shakespeare's Greek romance – because the gods decide to test it for her.

Referring us to a Platonic rather than Catholic concept of destiny, Rohmer also refuses to commit himself on the subject of Charles' miraculous reappearance. His characters are seldom churchgoers (a brief candle notably fails to attract divine attention in *Le Beau Mariage*), and Félicie's sudden 'conversion' in the cathedral at Nantes could be nothing more than an instant of intellectual clarity (and, perhaps, remorse at her treatment of the well-meaning Maxence) were it not for Rohmer's soundtrack clue – three phrases on a plucked string which are later repeated by the flute player who brings the 'statue' to life. The clear implication of the cathedral event is that by obeying the insight she has received, Félicie will regain her lover. The hint is there – for those who wish to see the entire fable as an illustration of faith vindicated – that, rather than being a patchwork of 'lapses', this is a startlingly devout parable about supernatural manipulation.

Sceptical we may be – and Rohmer claims that he doesn't take sides, that he is merely an observer – but there is every indication that he shares Félicie's amusement at the bookish Loïc (“If I say I love you, you'll look it up in something to see if it's true”), and her exasperation at the plodding Maxence, and that her stubborn innocence has his entire sympathy. Like so many of her predecessors in Rohmer's stories, Félicie is tiresome, petulant, indecisive, the despair of her men, and forever on the move between several alternative homes. Filmed with the usual precision – through windscreens, against windows and virginal white curtains, amid conciliatory historical landmarks – her impulsive wanderings are viewed with a redeeming irony, curiosity and tolerance. Fittingly, Rohmer's winter story has an affirmative inner glow.

Philip Strick

Cool World

USA 1992

Director: Ralph Bakshi

Certificate
12
Distributor
Blue Dolphin
Production Company
Paramount
Producer
Frank Mancuso Jnr
Associate Producer
Vikki Williams
Production Co-ordinator
Kristin Smith
Unit Production Manager
Scott White
Location Managers
Craig Pointes
Christine O'Rourke
Casting
Carrie Frazier
Shani Ginsberg
Assistant Directors
Marty Eli Schwartz
Richard Coad
Fernando A. Castroman
Screenplay
Michael Grais
Mark Victor
Director of Photography
John A. Alonzo
Colour
Technicolor
Additional Photography
Matthew F. Leonetti
Animation Photography
Format:
Michael Middleton
Co-ordinator:
Bill Bloom
Camera:
Ted T. Bemiller
Bill Bemiller
Bingo Ferguson
Bob Jacobs
Camera Operators
Chris Schwiebert
Remote:
Joe Sanchez
Spacecam Operator
Ron Goodman
Visual Effects
Supervising Editor
Kelly G. Crawford
Opticals
Cinema Research Corporation
Pacific Title
Animation
Supervisor:
Bruce Woodside
Production
Co-ordinator:
Gina Shay
Animation Layout/Design
Greg Hill
David Wasson
Character:
Louise Zingarelli
Animators
George Bakes
Anne Marie Bardwell
Paul Bolger
James Davis
Michael R. Gerard
Steve Gordon
Ronald P. Hughart
Auke Kazaleh
Gregory A. Manwaring
Jules Marino
Bill Melendez
Roy Meurin
James Murphy
Samuel W. Nicholson
Dana O'Connor
Alan Sperling
Greg Tiernan
Kenneth D. Walker
Background
Character Animation
Milton Knight
Mark S. O'Hare
Background Artists
Patricia Doktor
Brad Hicks
Ian Miller
Charles Pickens
Background Co-ordinator
Lisa O'Loughlin

Key
Clean-up
Eric Abjornson
Scott Bern
David Bombardier
Daniel L. Bond
Irene Coulouis
Sandy Henkin
Lureline Kohler
Boowan Lee
Leticia Lichtwardt
Chris Miller
Judith M. Niyver
Edward Rivera
Sandra Ryan
Maureen Trueblood
Animation Effects
Creative Supervisor:
Lee Crowe
Co-ordinator:
Ellen Greenblatt
Animators:
Craig Clark
Pat Clark
Phil Cummings
Michael D'Isa
Al Holter
Joey Mildenberger
Juli Murphy
Conrad Veruon
Dan Wanket
Articulate Mattes
Angela Damos
Ko Hashiguchi
Craig Littel-Herrick
John Shourt
Ink & Paint Production Supervisor
Tania M. Burton
Key Colour Modelling
Jon Terada
Colour Models
Anthony Ostyn
Animation Checking Supervisor
Letha Prince
Animation Checking
Renee Alcazar
Eleanor Dahlen
Charles Gefre
Beverly Randall
Myoung Smith
Paint Lab
Ann Sullivan
Xerox Check Supervisor
Janet M. Zoll
Xerox Check
Karen N. China
Lillian Fitts
Deanna Spears
Lea Stewart
Inking Supervisor
Peggy Gregory
Inking
Joyce Alekander
Mimi Clayton
Casey Clayton
Shigeko Doyle
Deborah Goddard
Kathy Wilbur
Mark-up Supervisor
Cathy Walters
Mark-up
Gale Raleigh
Bonnie Ramsey
Irma Velez
Michele Zurcher
Paint Supervisor
Annette Leavitt
Final Check Supervisor
Stephanie Myers
Cel Service Supervisor
Jessie Palubeski
Animation
Performance Models
Bob:
Robert Bell
Mash:
Gary Friedkin
Lonette:
Claire Hoak
Jenine Jennings
Doc Whiskers:
Antonio Hoyos
Holli:
Jenine Jennings
Nails:
Leroy Thompson

Bash:
Stephen Worth
Animation Consultant
Sylvia Pompei
Editors
Steve Mirkovich
Annamaria Szanto
Production Designer
Michael Corenblith
Art Director
David James Bomba
Set Design
Lori Rowbotham
Mitchell Lee Simmons
Set Decorator
Meredith Boswell
Conceptual Design
Barry Jackson
Illustrator
Ian Miller
Special Effects
Leonor M. Wood
Key:
Joe Quinlivan
Mechanical Supervisor:
Dale L. Martin
Music
Mark Isham
Additional:
John Dickson
Music Director
Allan Wilson
Music Performed by
The Munich Symphony Orchestra
Instrumentalists:
Ray Babbington
Terry Bozzio
Dave Hartley
Nigel Hitchcock
Greg Knowles
Music Production Co-ordinator
Graham Walker
Music Editors
Christopher Kennedy
Scott Grusin
Music Co-ordinator
Jenine Jennings
Music Consultants
Gaylon J. Horton
Suzan K. Mann
Songs
"Play with Me"
by and performed by
Thompson Twins; "My
Ideal" by Leo Robins,
Richard A. Whiting,
Newell Chose; "N.W.O."
by and performed
by Ministry; "Under"
by and performed by
Brian Eno; "The Devil
Does Drugs", "Sex on
Wheelz" by Buzz
McCoy, Groovie Mann,
performed by My Life
with the Thrill Kill
Kult; "Ah-Ah", "Next
Is the E" by Richard
M. Hall, performed
by Moby; "Houlu's
Groove", "Her Sassy
Kiss", "Sedusa" by Buzz
McCoy, performed by
My Life with the Thrill
Kill Kult; "The Witch"
by Ian Astbury, Billy
Duffy, performed by
The Cult; "Do That
Thang" by Yuri Dektor,
performed by Da Juke;
"Papa New Guinea" by
Brian Dougans, Gerry
Cockbain, performed
by The Future Sound
of London; "Industry
and Seduction" by
and performed by
Tom Bailey; "Mindless"
by and performed by
Mindless; "That Old
Black Magic" by Harold
Arlen, Johnny Mercer,
performed by Frank
Sinatra Jnr; "Let's Make
Love" by Sammy Cahn,
James Van Hussen,
performed by Kim
Basinger, Frank Sinatra
Jnr; "Disappointed"
by Johnny Marr,
Bernard Sumner, Neil
Tennant, performed
by Electronic;
"Real Cool World"
by and performed
by David Bowie

Choreography
Jenine Jennings
Costume Design
Malissa Daniel
Costume Supervisor
Donna Barrish
Costumers
Diane Crooke
Kim Basinger:
Donna O'Neal
Make-up
Key:
Jean A. Black
Kim Basinger:
Jack A. Freeman
Jane English
Title Design
Dan Curry
Sound Design
Skip Lievsay
Eugene Gearty
Supervising Sound Editor
Hamilton Sterling
Dialogue Supervisor
Harry B. Miller III
Sound Editors
Bob Newlan
Hugo Weng
Duncan Burns
ADR Supervisor
Renée Tondelli
ADR Editors
James Borgardt
Chris Jargo
Foley Supervisor
Bruce Pross
Foley Editors
Frank Kern
Eliza Paley
Steve Visscher
Sound Recordists
James Thornton
Music:
Chris Dibble
Dolby stereo
Sound Re-recordists
Donald O. Mitchell
Rick Hart
Frank Montano
Sound Effects Editors
Bill Koepnik
John Joseph Thomas
Production Assistants
Chris D. Brewster
Amber Cordero
Patrick Gaynes
Aimee Johnson
Michael Larsen
William Leahy
William R. Leavitt
Gregory McKnight
Joey Mullen
Maura Reyes
Richard Smith
Kane Wickham
Stunt Co-ordinator
R. A. Rondell
Stunts
Tracy Keehn-Dashnaw
Nick Brett
Greg Barnett
Greg Collins
Chris Durand
Buddy Joe Hooker
Matt Johnston
Glenn Scott Wilder
Steve Kelso
Ken Blazer
Jeff Dashnaw
Danny Epper
Maria Kelly
Kenny Bates
Cyndi Lee Rice
Lynn Salvatori
Gary Davis
David Welch
Dick Ziker
John Meier
Pilots
Gary Douris
Skip Evans
John Sarviss
Eddie Sanchez

Cast
Kim Basinger
Holli Would
Gabriel Byrne
Jack Deebs
Brad Pitt
Detective Frank Harris
Michele Abrams
Jennifer Malley
Deirdre O'Connell
Isabelle Malley
Janni Brenn-Lowen
Mom Harris
William Frankfather
Greg Collins
Cops
Maurice LaMarche
Joey Camen
Interrogators
Maurice LeMarche
Doc Whiskers/Mash/
Drunk Bar Patron/
Super Jack
Michael David Lally
Sparks
Carrie Hamilton
Comic Bookstore
Cashier

Stephen Worth
Murray Podwal
Store Patrons
Jenine Jennings
Crops Bunny
Joey Camen
Slash
Gregory Snegoff
Bash
Candi Milo
Bob/Lonette
Charles Adler
Nails
Patrick Pinney
Bouncer
Joey Camen
Holli's Door
Frank Sinatra Jnr
Himself
Lamont Jackson
Lucky's Bouncer
Paul Benictor
Valet
Big Yank
Plaza Bouncer

9,164 feet
102 minutes

Las Vegas, 1945. The demobbed Frank Harris is sucked into the cartoon Cool World by a spike gun belonging to one of its inhabitants, the doodle Dr Vincent Whiskers. Las Vegas, 1992. Convict Jack Deebs, who has taken up cartooning while in prison, is pulled by voluptuous doodle Holli Would through his drawing board into Cool World, where he stays only briefly. Holli subsequently informs Frank, who is now a CWPD detective, that she wants to have sex with Jack. Released from jail, Jack visits a store selling his popular *Cool World* comic, after which he is sucked back into Cool World itself, where he is rescued by Holli from her mugger friend Slash and his gang. Later, Frank meets Jack in a club and tells him that in Cool World, anything goes except sex between humans and doodles, which would destroy both worlds.

Frank's CWPD sidekick Nails interrupts Frank's restrained embraces with his doodle girlfriend Lonette to drive him to Holli's tower to warn her against sex with Jack. Refused entry, Frank and Nails scale the walls to reach Holli, but when Slash brings the ex-con to her later, she seduces Jack and becomes human. Learning of her mis-demeanour, Nails pays Holli a call, but she 'inks' him by sucking him into Jack's fountain pen. Holli and Jack materialise in the human world, alarming the latter's neighbours Jennifer and Isabelle. Holli propositions men in a Vegas bar. Intermittently, she and Jack flash into and out of doodle



Meeting cute

form; in Cool World, Frank does likewise. Despite Lonette's entreaties that he stay, Frank returns to Vegas hoping to find Dr Vincent Whiskers' spike gun before Holli – who believes it can render her totally human – destroys the two worlds. Jennifer drives Jack and Frank, who suspects that Dr Vincent Whiskers may be casino owner Vegas Vinnie, to the latter's skyscraper.

Holli, unable to find Vegas Vinnie among his casino punters, and ejected by bouncers for being penniless, is later accosted by Whiskers/Vegas Vinnie, who warns her against touching the spike gun. Holli bursts him to pieces with Jack's pen. Frank pursues Holli up Vegas Vinnie's skyscraper only to be pushed off a balcony. Holli touches the spike but, startled by escaping doodle hordes, drops the pen, which breaks on the pavement below, releasing Nails. Jack turns into a doodle superhero and saves the two worlds. Nails returns to Cool World, where Lonette learns that Frank was pushed by the doodle rather than the human Holli, and will therefore live as a doodle. Returning to Cool World, Frank consummates his relationship with Lonette.

Cool World's screenplay, with its adolescent obsession with first-time sex and its nymphomaniac heroine, lacks the well-rounded characterisation of either the crowd-pleasing *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* or the more off-beat *Volere, Volare*. Despite the avowed attempt by veteran drawn animation director Bakshi (*Fritz the Cat*, *Lord of the Rings*) to push back the technical boundaries with (to quote the press kit) "blue screen backgrounds, rotoscope, illustrated sets and an updated...multi-plane camera...concept", the live action/animation interplay is disappointing. Admittedly, the three-dimensional sets fitted with two-dimensional props – though a long way from Disney's multiplane – are reasonably innovative, the matte lines are completely invisible and the rotoscoped characters (that is, drawn from live action footage for rephotographing as animation) are impressive. But problems arise when the doodles and humans meet: Brad Pitt's arm around the cartoon Lonette's shoulders does not appear to be resting on them, for instance.

Ironically, the opening sequence, in which Brad Pitt as Frank suffers a motorbike accident redundant to the plot, is the only well-directed live-action segment, while the Cool World sections are swamped by numerous irrelevant characters running or flying across the screen. Pitt and Gabriel Byrne struggle bravely against the odds, though unfortunately, the same cannot be said of Kim Basinger. *Cool World's* only genuinely hilarious moment has a falling doodle's mouth envelop the camera, which proceeds down into his stomach, cutting to a reverse angle pulling out of his plummeting anus – at once a technical *tour de force* and a juvenile prank.

Jeremy Clarke

A Few Good Men

USA 1992

Director: Rob Reiner

Certificate
15

Distributor
Columbia TriStar

Production Company
Castle Rock Entertainment

Executive Producers
William Gilmore
Rachel Pfeffer

Producers
David Brown
Rob Reiner
Andrew Scheinman

Co-producers
Jeffrey Scott
Steve Nicolaides

Production Co-ordinators
Linda Allan-Folsom
Elizabeth Ervin

Washington:
Alison Sherman

Production Manager
Steve Nicolaides

Location Manager
Richard Davis Jnr

Post-production Supervisor
Christy Dimmig

Casting
Jane Jenkins
Janet Hirshenson

Associates:
Michael Hirshenson
Susanna Griffith

Extras:
Victor Davis Casting

Assistant Directors
Frank Capra III
Matthew Rowland
Algric L. Chaplin
Alisa Statman

Screenplay
Aaron Sorkin

Based on his own play

Director of Photography
Robert Richardson

Colour
Technicolor

2nd Unit Director of Photography
Gary Kibbe

Camera Operators
Anthony Gaudioz

Washington:
(Additional)
Gabor Kover

Steadicam Operators
James Muro

Washington:
Bob Ulland

Editors
Robert Leighton
Steve Nevius

Production Designer
J. Michael Riva

Art Director
David Klassen

Set Design
Virginia Randolph
Rob Woodruff

Set Decorator
Michael Taylor

Production Illustrator
Tom Lay

Special Effects Co-ordinator
Eugene Crum

Music
Marc Shaiman

Orchestrations
Mark McKenzie

Additional:
Hummie Mann

Music Producers
Hummie Mann
Marc Shaiman

Music Editor
Curtis Roush

Songs
“Hound Dog” by Jerry Leiber, Mike Stoller, performed by Willie Mae Thornton; “Timber I’m Falling in Love” by Kostas, performed by Patty Loveless; “Next Time You See Me” by Earl Forest, William G. Harvey, performed by Jimmy Cotton; “All I Want to Do” by and performed by UB40

Costume Design
Gloria Gresham

Wardrobe
Men:
James Tyson
Women:
Margo Baxley
David Page
Nancy Cone
Lucinda Campbell
Darryl Athons
Leslie Weir

Make-up
Head:
Steve Abrams
Edouard
F. Henriques III
Richard Dean

Titles/Opticals
Pacific Title

Supervising Sound Editors
Louis L. Edemann
Charles L. Campbell

Sound Editors
Chuck Neely
Tim Chau
Lenny Geschke
Jeremy Gordon
Elliot Koretz
Joe Morrissey
Colin Mouat

Supervising ADR Editors
Larry Singer
Andrea Horta

Sound Recordists
Bob Eber
Matt Patterson

ADR:
Ann Hadsell
Foley:
Sandra Garcia

Music:
Joel Moss

Sound Re-recordists
Kevin O’Connell
Rick Kline

ADR:
Dean Drabin
Foley:
Marilyn Graf

Foley Artists
Kevin Bartnof
Robin Harlan

Technical Consultant
Brigadier General David M. Brahms

Creative Consultant
Washington:
William Goldman

Production Assistants
Darin Rivetti
Lisa Aubel
Annika Nord
Angela Tortu
Russ Vollmers
Joe Aspromonti
Dion Vines
Demetra Stamus
Brady Thomas
Mickey Garrigan

Camera:
Keith Smith

Stunt Co-ordinator
Tim Davison

Cast

Tom Cruise
Lieutenant Daniel Kaffee

Jack Nicholson
Colonel Nathan R. Jessep

Demi Moore
Lieutenant Commander JoAnne Galloway

Kevin Bacon
Captain Jack Ross

Kiefer Sutherland
Lieutenant Jonathan Kendrick

Kevin Pollak
Lieutenant Sam Weinberg

James Marshall
Pfc. Louden Downey

J. T. Walsh
Lieutenant Colonel Matthew Markinson

Christopher Guest
Doctor Stone

J. A. Preston
Judge Randolph

Matt Craven
Lieutenant Dave Spradling

Wolfgang Bodison
Lance Corporal Harold W. Dawson

Xander Berkeley
Captain Whitaker

John M. Jackson
Captain West

Noah Wyle
Corporal Jeffrey Barnes

Cuba Gooding Jnr
Corporal Carl Hammaker

Lawrence Lowe
Bailiff

Josh Malina
Orderly

Oscar Jordan
Steward

John M. Matthews
Al Wexo

Guards

Aaron Sorkin
Man in Bar

Frank Cavestani
Agent

Jan Munroe
Jan Foreman

Ron Ostrow
MP

Matthew Saks
David

Harry Caesar
Luther

Michael DeLorenzo
Pfc. William T. Santiago

Geoffrey Nauffts
Lieutenant Sherby

Arthur Senzy
Robert C. McGuire

Cameron Thor
Commander Lawrence

David Bowe
Commander Gibbs

Gene Whittington
Mr Dawson

Maud Winchester
Aunt Ginny

12,405 feet

138 minutes

The US Marine Base, Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. At night, Lance Corporal Dawson and Private Downey enter the quarters of Private Santiago and gag him with a towel. Later, Santiago dies. In Washington, navy lawyer Daniel Kaffee is assigned to defend the pair, to the chagrin of JoAnne Galloway, who has requested the assignment. In Cuba, Kaffee and his associate Sam Weinberg interview Colonel Jessep, the CO, and his second-in-command Markinson. Jessep explains that Santiago, a persistent foul-up, had offered to inform on Dawson in regard to a border incident in return for being given a transfer. This had put him in danger of a ‘Code Red’ (an unofficial punishment inflicted by a soldier’s peers), which Jessep claims he had specifically ordered not to be carried out, while arranging for Santiago to be flown out of the base to escape reprisals. Kaffee suspects that Jessep actually refused Santiago’s transfer request and has subsequently doctored records to suggest that there was no plane which could have got him out of Cuba before the incident which led to his death. But he is also aware that Jessep is being groomed for high office, and that he has probably been given the case over JoAnne because his record for plea-bargaining suggests he will avoid an embarrassing trial. After arguing with JoAnne and Weinberg, and consulting with his clients, who allege that their immediate superior, Lieutenant Kendrick, privately ordered a Code Red on Santiago, who had an undiagnosed heart condition, Kaffee decides to take the case to court. Markinson, a party to Jessep’s forgery, commits suicide rather than give testimony, and Kaffee is forced to bring into the court airfield ground

crew who will probably not remember the disputed flight. However, the presence of the ground crew rattles Jessep as he takes the stand, and Kaffee browbeats him into admitting that he ordered Kendrick to order the Code Red, where-upon he is arrested. The judge rules Dawson and Downey not guilty of murder but still discharges them dishonourably. Downey is outraged, but Dawson confesses that he now realises they were remiss in their duty, in that they were sworn to protect people like Santiago.

Although based on a Broadway play by Aaron Sorkin, *A Few Good Men* seems a transparent rewrite of *The Caine Mutiny Court Martial*, with Jack Nicholson as a Captain Queeg whose crime is the brand of unofficial initiative-taking usually seen as a positive trait in films about the military. Tom Cruise takes the old José Ferrer role of the defence lawyer who simultaneously manages the Perry Mason stunt of getting his incredibly guilty-seeming clients off, points the finger at the real culprits and scores philosophical points off the issues of martial honour and socially approved brutality raised by the case. He also manages to demonstrate that he is not the equivocating lightweight everyone else in the film assumes him to be.

The film is undeniably a sure-fire hit as a vehicle for the two contrasted stars: Cruise is all confidence and ease, nurturing an inferiority complex about his Attorney General father, but still strutting around the courtroom darting out snappy questions, legal conjuring tricks and well-filed objections with all the youthful glee he brought to jet planes in *Top Gun*, the pool table in *The Color of Money*, or the bar-room in *Cocktail*. Nicholson, however, his presence limited to a few set-piece scenes, plays an obvious monster, seen in an awkward early flashback refusing the transfer he claims to have

approved and thus branded throughout as a liar and a swine, barking taunts and orders at his jellyfish subordinate (played by a weaselly Kiefer Sutherland and the always gutless J. T. Walsh) and collapsing on the stand with a display of snarling self-righteousness. This allows for a cheera-long Cruise triumph, although Jessep is too simple a villain, especially by contrast with the wrong-but-right Queeg, for any meaningful verdict to be passed on him. The most embarrassing aspect of the endeavour is the discussion about the nature of the men society requires to man the barricades, with Jessep climactically snarling, “You want somebody like me on the wall”, in an echo of JoAnne’s earlier statement that she is interested in defending the accused, who might seem to be simple bullies, because “they stand on a wall and say ‘nothing’s going to hurt you, not on my watch’”. The sentiments are expressed in the most blatant and dull-witted of dialogue exchanges, almost suitable for a 50s Cold War programmer, with the occasional cut-away to a close-drill marching group demonstrating extreme dexterity, or fine figures of humanity like Cruise and Demi Moore looking wholesomely sexy in sharply tailored military outfits.

Nevertheless, while the supposed content of the film is just so much blather, the form is invulnerable, and Rob Reiner, taking a rest after recent directorial challenges, adopts precisely the unassuming, sit-back-and-let-the-actors-talk approach of the Perry Mason TV specials. He solicits miraculously unswamped performances from Kevin Bacon and Kevin Pollak in the potentially thankless roles of the prosecuting lawyer whose watertight case comes apart at the seams, and the unglamorous researcher who comes up with the useful revelations that allow Kaffee to turn the situation around with a grin and a flourish.

Kim Newman



Simply wrong: Jack Nicholson

Home Alone 2:
Lost in New York

USA 1992

Director: Chris Columbus

Certificate PG	Production Designer Sandy Veneziano
Distributor 20th Century Fox	Art Directors Gary Lee
Production Company 20th Century Fox	NY: Steve Jordan
Executive Producers Mark Radcliffe Duncan Henderson Richard Vane	LA: Dan Maltese
Producer John Hughes	Art Department
Production Co-ordinator Kathleen Courtney	Co-ordinator James Nedza
Unit Co-ordinator Mitch Dauterive	Lead Set Design Stephen Berger
Unit Production Managers Duncan Henderson Peter McIntosh	Set Design Stephen Cane Don Woodruff Karen Fletcher
Location Managers Jacolyn Baker NY:	Rock: Alex Scutti
Jan Foster	Set Decorators Marvin March
2nd Unit:	NY: George DeTitta
Charles Zalbern	Set Dressers On-set:
LA:	Quint Matthys
T.J. Healey	NY: Jim Fredericks
2nd Unit Director Freddie Hice	On-set LA: Matt Furgison
Casting Janet Hirshenson	Illustrator George Jensen
Jane Jenkins	Stand-by Scenic Artist Joseph Garzero
ADR Voice:	Special Effects Supervisor Dan Sudick
Barbara Harris	Special Effects Co-ordinator
Extras:	Stan Parks
Holzer-Roche-Ridge	Special Effects Bill Kennedy
Extras NY:	Set Foreman:
Sylvia Fay	Kevin Quibell
Extras LA:	Shop Foreman:
Central Casting	Sam Price
Assistant Directors James Giovannetti Jnr	Construction Foreman: Mike Morris
Geoff Hansen	NY: John Ottesen
Michael Samson	Ron Ottesen
Aimee Kohn	LA: John Fontana
NY:	Scott Forbes
Mathew Weiner	Music John Williams
Anthony Desposito	Orchestrations John Neufeld
2nd Unit:	Supervising Music Editor Ken Wannberg
Jacolyn Baker	Songs "All Alone on Christmas" by Steven Van Zandt, performed by Darlene Love, Little Steven, New Jersey All Stars; "My Christmas Tree" by Jack Feldman, Alan Menken, performed by The Home Alone Children's Choir; "A Holly Jolly Christmas" by Johnny Marks, performed by Alan Jackson; "Christmas Star", "Merry Christmas, Merry Christmas" by Leslie Bricusse, John Williams; "Jingle Bell Rock" by Joe Beal, Jim Boothe, performed by Bobby Helms; "Sleigh Ride" by Leroy Anderson, Mitchell Parrish, performed by TLC (T-Boz, Left Eye, Chilli); "Cool Jerk" by Donald Storbball, performed by The Capitols; "The Most Wonderful Time of the Year" by Eddie Pola, George Wyle, performed by Andy Williams; "It's
Screenplay John Hughes Based on charcters created by John Hughes	
Director of Photography Julio Macat In colour	
2nd Unit Photography Doug O'Neons	
Camera Operators Dennis Smith	
B:	
Anastas Michos	
B LA:	
Lex Du Pont	
Video Playback Frank Yario Jnr	
NY:	
Neils Johnson	
Joe Tramell	
2nd Unit:	
Steve Braderich	
Visual Effects Executive-in-charge of Production:	
Krystyna Demkowicz	
Supervisor:	
Craig Barron	
Opticals Pacific Title	
Matte Painting Supervisor Michael Pangrazio	
Matte Artists Brian Flora	
Bill Mather	
Christopher Evans	
Motion Control Operator Cameron Noble	
Special Digital Effects Digital Magic	
Editor Raja Gosnell	
Associate Editor Tim Silano	



Same again: Macaulay Culkin

Beginning to Look Like Christmas" by Meredith Wilson, performed by Johnny Mathis; "Home Alone Christmas Melody"	Patricia Willett Mia Ries Set: Bob Saunders Jeff Richman Office NY: Christo Morse Donald Murphy Office LA: John Gleeson Ron Vignone Set LA: John Cook Stunt Co-ordinator Freddie Hice Stunts Troy James Brown Leon Delaney Larry Nicholas James Fierro Lane Leavitt Julie Stone John Cenatiempo Rick LeFevour Cris Thomas-Palomino Stan Parks Frank Ferrara Stacy Logan Danny Costa Stand-ins Brian Haraf Ben Lissner Christopher Glover Jerry Rossetti Dale Hawes Pigeon Wranglers Mark Jackson Roland Raffler Mac Embury Wally Ross Joy Green Doree Sitterly Helicopter Pilot Al Cerullo Film Extract <i>It's a Wonder ful Life</i> (1946)
Costume Design Jay Hurley	
Costume Supervisor Mickey Antonetti	
Costumers Gina Panno NY:	
Timothy J. Alberts	
Heidi Schulman	
LA:	
Andrea Weaver	
Make-up Key:	
Linda Melazzo	
NY:	
Joe Campayno	
Special Make-up Ken Myers	
Additional:	
Michael Maddi	
Titles R/Greenberg Associates	
Sound Editors Dino Dimuro	
Jay Richardson	
Frank Smathers	
Dialogue:	
Dan Rich	
Chris Hogan	
Randy Kelly	
ADR Supervisor Mary Andrews	
ADR Editors Willy Hoyte Jeff Watts	
Foley Editors Kelly Oxford Steve Mann Richard Dwan Dan Hageman	
Sound Recordists Jim Alexander Tim Webb Tony Araki NY:	
Peter Ilardi	
Robert Balzarini	
Music:	
Shawn Murphy	
Sue McLean	
Foley Recoridst David Gertz Dolby stereo	
Sound Re-recordists Chris Carpenter Rick Hart Kevin E. Carpenter	
Supervising Sound Effects Editors Michael Wilhoit Wylie Stateman	
Foley Artists Jeff Wilhoit James Moriana	
Additional Audio Kiwi Waugh Dave Young Lon Bender	
Production Assistants Office:	
George Patterson	
	Cast Macaulay Culkin Kevin McCallister Joe Pesci Harry Lyme Daniel Stern Marvin Murchins Catherine O'Hara Kate McCallister John Heard Peter McCallister Devin Ratray Buzz Hillary Wolf Megan Maureen Elisabeth Shay Linnie Michael C. Maronna Jeff Gerry Bamman Uncle Frank Terrie Snell Aunt Leslie Jedidiah Cohen Rod SentaMoses Tracy Daiana Campeanu Sondra

Kieran Culkin Fuller	Ron Canada Times Square Cop
Anna Slotky Brooke	Cedric Young Central Park Cop
Tim Curry Mr Hector, Concierge	William Dambra Arresting Cops in Central Park
Brenda Fricker Pigeon Lady	Fred Krause Cliff
Eddie Bracken Mr Duncan	James Cole Security Guard
Dana Ivey Mrs Stone, Desk Clerk	Donald Trump Donald Trump
Rob Schneider Cedric, Bellman	Warren Rice Doorman
Leigh Zimmerman Fashion Model	Thomas Civitano Plaza Marketing Director
Ralph Foody Gangster	Daniel Dassin Waiter
Clare Hoak Gangster 'Dame'	Donna Black Health Club Woman
Monica Devereux Hotel Operator	Abdoulaye N'Gom Bead Vendor
Bob Eubanks Ding-Dang-Dong Host	Peter Pantaleo Airport Van Drivers
Rip Taylor Jay P. Morgan	Michael Hansen Limousine Driver
Jimmie Walker Celebrities	Mario Todisco Cab Driver
Patricia Devereux Aimee Devereux	Clarke Devereux Evidence Specialist
Contestants	Anthony Cannata Sergeant in Toy Store
A.M. Columbus JoeLiss	Eleanor Columbus Little Girl in Toy Store
Skycap O'Hare	Karen Giordano Fran McGee
Teri McEvoy Agent, NY Gate/O'Hare	Streetwalkers Sleeping Man
Ally Sheedy NY Ticket Agent	Kevin Thomas Geeky Kid
Harry Hutchinson Clarke P. Devereux	
Ticket Takers	
Sandra Macat Venessia Valentino	
Flight Attendants	
Andre Lachauette Man on Plane	
Rick Shafer Peter Look-alike	10,792 feet 120 minutes
Rod Sell Officer Bennett	

The McCallisters pack for their Christmas holiday in Florida. Unimpressed with this destination – there are no Christmas trees there – and baited into an argument with his older brother Buzz, Kevin is exiled to sleep in the attic. Despite the usual last-minute panic, this year he makes it safely to the airport. There is a mix-up inside the terminal, however, and Kevin boards the wrong plane. The mistake goes unnoticed until the family arrives in wet-and-windy Florida, and Kevin finds himself alone in New York City.

Armed with his father's wallet, including several hundred dollars in cash and a credit card, Kevin decides to make the best of the situation: he tricks the snooty staff into giving him a plush suite at the Plaza hotel and goes shopping at Mr Duncan's old-fashioned toy store. Learning that the Christmas Eve takings are donated to a local children's hospital, Kevin makes a generous donation. Touched, the proprietor gives him a pair of ivory turtle doves as a talisman of friendship.

Having escaped from prison, Kevin's old adversaries, the "Wet Bandits", Harry and Marvin (having renamed themselves the "Sticky Bandits"), are also in New York. They plan to steal the takings from Duncan's store on the night before Christmas. Kevin falls into their hands but manages to escape after learning of their scheme. As night falls, Kevin wanders through the city lonely and afraid. The hotel is out of bounds after his father's credit card has been reported stolen and his cash is running out. The McCallisters have

meanwhile traced Kevin and taken up residence at the Plaza.

In Central Park he meets the Pigeon Lady, a tramp constantly surrounded by a cloud of pigeons. Scared at first, Kevin finds that she is actually a warm and sympathetic person. She shows him her hideaway high in the rafters of a concert hall. Deciding to foil Harry and Marvin's robbery, Kevin first boobytraps an empty, half-renovated house belonging to his uncle, then he baits the thieves into chasing him just as they are setting about the robbery. In the house, a succession of snares and traps stops them in their tracks. Kevin falls into their clutches just after he has phoned the police, but the Pigeon Lady saves the day. The McCallisters are reunited and wake up on Christmas morning to hundreds of gifts from Mr Duncan. Kevin runs down to the Park to present the Pigeon Lady with one of his turtle doves.

Just different enough to invalidate the title (how about *Far from Home Alone?*), this sequel is in other respects a slavish imitation of the first film. It actually goes out of its way to follow the same path, dropping young Kevin in New York City only to replay the original story with the same structure, the same characters, and most disappointingly, the same box of tricks. Kevin never actually says "How can the same shit happen to the same guy twice?", like Bruce Willis in another far-fetched 20th Century Fox sequel, but here he is fending off unwelcome attention with his pocket voice recorder, with a video of an old gangster movie, with a man-sized silhouette... and here, again, he befriends an initially scary outsider (the Pigeon Lady standing in for the Shovel Slayer), and conducting a running battle with the Wet Bandits that culminates in a wincingly funny Tom and Jerry show-down in a boobytrapped town house.

Joe Dante made the shift in locale from small town USA to the Big Apple the guiding principal of *Gremlins 2*, and Chris Columbus has himself explored the menace of the mean streets for kids in *Adventures in Babysitting*. But in John Hughes' scheme of things, NYC is only an excuse for a fractionally grander scale: ensconced in a Plaza suite, Kevin has more fun than at home; wandering the streets at night, he's more alone than before. That is the theory at least. In practice, the contrivances are worked out so lugubriously, the Significant Plot Points are so heavily signposted, that it is difficult to dispel the inertia of *déjà vu*.

Even more than the first film, *Home Alone 2* takes an age to engineer the point at which the film can really begin – i.e., getting Kevin on his own – and then it is another hour or so before the slapstick hits the fan. It is as if Hughes was as nonplussed as everyone else by *Home Alone's* phenomenal box-office success, and decided to retain each and every element – flaws and all – when he fed the sequel into his script computer.

Tom Charity

Into the West

Eire 1992

Director: Mike Newell

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Entertainment

Production Company

Little Bird

In association with

Parallel Films/

Majestic Films/

International

Miramax Film/

Film Four

International/

Newcomm

Executive Producer

James Mitchell

Co-executive Producers

Guy East

Bob Weinstein

Harvey Weinstein

Producers

Jonathan Cavendish

Tim Palmer

Co-producers

Jane Doolan

Susan Slonaker

Associate Producer

Gabriel Byrne

Production Co-ordinator

Niamh Nolan

Production Manager

Mary Alleguen

Location Manager

John McDonnell

2nd Unit Director

Barry Blackmore

Casting

Ros Hubbard

John Hubbard

Additional:

Mary Maguire

Assistant Directors

Simon Moseley

Lisa Mulcahy

Brendan Geraghty

Robert Quinn

Screenplay

Jim Sheridan

Based on a story

by Michael Pearce

Additional Writing

David Keating

Director of Photography

Tom Sigel

Colour

Technicolor

2nd Unit Director of

Photography

Des Whelan

Steadicam Operator

Peter Robinson

Editor

Peter Boyle

Production Designer

Jamie Leonard

Art Director

Mark Geraghty

Scenic Artist

Steve Mitchell

Special Effects Supervisor

Gerry Johnston

Music

Patrick Doyle

Music Director/

Orchestrations

Fiachra Trench

Music Supervisor

Maggie Rodford

Music Editor

Roy Pendergast

Costume Design

Consolata Boyle

Wardrobe

Mistress:

Rhona McGuirke

Master:

Mark Holmes

Make-up Artists

Morna Ferguson

Ellen Barkin:

Aileen Seaton

Norma Hill

Titles/Opticals

The Optical

Partnership

Sound Editor

Dialogue:

Bob Risk

Foley Editor

Mark Auguste

Sound Recordist

Peter Lindsay

Sound Re-recordist

Peter Maxwell

Sound Transfers

Screen Scene

Sound Effects Editor

Campbell Askew

Stunt Co-ordinator

Tony Smart

Stunts

Alan Walsh

Dominic Hewitt

Stunt Doubles

Riding:

Jason Behan

Linda Sobey

Diving:

Gordon O'Dwyer

Stand-in

Bridgette Fortune

Armourer

John McKenna

Animals

Jim Furlong

Horsemasters

France:

Joelle Baland

Ireland:

Donal Fortune

Helicopter Pilots

Colin Sayers

Niall O'Donnell

Cast

Gabriel Byrne

Papa Riley

Ellen Barkin

Kathleen

Ciarán Fitzgerald

Ossie Riley

Ruaidhrí Conroy

Tito Riley

David Kelly

Grandpa Ward

Johnny Murphy

Tracker

Colm Meaney

Barreller

John Kavanagh

Noel Hartnett

Brendan Gleeson

Inspector Bolger

Jim Norton

Superintendent O'Mara

Anita Reeves

Mrs Murphy

Ray McBride

Mr Murphy

Dave Duffy

Morrissey

Stuart Dannell

Conor Murphy

Becca Hollinshead

Birdy Murphy

Bianca Hollinshead

Angela Murphy

Owen O'Gorman

Cafferty

Mark O'Regan

Welfare Man

PhelimDrew

Sergeant Brophy

Sean Madden

School Inspector

Vinnie McCabe

Video Shop Owner

Tony Rohr

Traveller

Brendan O'Duill

Barman

Dave Carey

Resident

Joan Sheehy

Woman with Pram

Lana Citron

Sophie

Clive Geraghty

Smiley

Charles Ruxton

Tommo

Stanley Townsend

Rico



The weight of myth: Ciarán Fitzgerald

Derry Power

Hotel Clerk

Tim McDonnell

Shopkeeper

Joe Pilkington

Detective

Frank O'Sullivan

Seán Simon

Liam Cunningham

Sean Lawlor

Policemen

Gerry Stembridge

Kevin Reynolds

Michael Sheridan

Aine O'Connor

Reporters

Dave Finnegan

Car Man

Gladys Sheehan

Woman in Lift

9,184 feet

102 minutes

● Eire. Grandpa Ward, a traveller, is alone by the sea when a white horse appears. It follows him to a travellers' encampment in the middle of Ballymun Flats, a dilapidated high-rise estate in Dublin where his young grandsons Tito and Ossie live with their father Papa Riley, one-time traveller king and widower of Grandpa Ward's daughter Mary. When Mary died giving birth to Ossie, Papa Riley's grief led him to reject the travelling life and flee to the 'settled' world, to Grandpa Ward's disapproval. Grandpa Ward tells the children that the horse's name is Tir na nOg, meaning land of eternal youth, and that it comes from the sea. It forms an instant attachment to Ossie and moves into the Rileys' flat. Following complaints from other residents, the police arrive and Tir na nOg is taken away and illegally sold by the corrupt police inspector Bolger to Noel Hartnett, a wealthy businessman.

The boys discover Hartnett's identity when Ossie spots Tir na nOg and sees his 'owner' interviewed on a TV racing programme. Papa Riley is dragged in for questioning by the Garda and shown video footage of another race at which his sons take the horse and ride away on it. The boys and Tir na nOg head west into the countryside with a £5,000 reward on their heads. Papa Riley seeks out the travellers to ask for their help in tracking down his sons. His old friends Kathleen and Barreller agree to join his search and the three set off on horseback.

As they near the coast, Tir na nOg leads the boys to their mother's grave.

The three adults later find Grandpa Ward at the same spot. As the police close in, Tir na nOg carries the boys to a beach, where Papa Riley, Grandpa Ward, Kathleen and Barreller are waiting. The police advance on the horse with a net, but it carries Ossie out to sea and they trap Papa Riley instead. Beneath the water, Ossie is reunited with his dead mother. Papa Riley fights free and carries Ossie out of the water. Ossie tells him about his meeting with his mother. The police retreat, but the horse has vanished. As the family and their traveller friends gather round the campfire that night, the caravan bursts into flames. Tir na nOg emerges from the fire and gallops away.

● Scripted by Jim (My Left Foot) Sheridan from a story supplied by the producers, this road movie gives itself several tricky hurdles to negotiate: Aside from the difficulties faced by any director whose central characters are a horse and two children, Newell takes on the delicate task of adopting the viewpoint of the travellers, whose nomadic culture is misunderstood, mistrusted and xenophobically abused in Ireland, and of striking a balance between authenticity and magical realism.

This mix works potently in the early city scenes, where the anachronistic Tir na nOg, led through Dublin's crowded shopping centres, crammed into the Ballymun council block lifts, or leaping magically over police vans, serves as a humorous comment on the poverty and instability of urban life and the travellers' ambiguous status in the 'settled' world. The Rileys are shown as victims – as when Papa is abused and beaten up in police custody – but they are also manipulators. In one very funny scene, the boys have little luck begging in the city centre until Tito orders Ossie to make his rendition of "Danny Boy" more heartrending by breathing asthmatically.

In the film's best moment, the

restive horse, cornered in the box-like flat by the Garda, kicks its way through the flimsy wall into next-door's living room where the startled neighbours are watching *Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid* on television. As its title suggests, *Into the West* draws conscious parallels between the travellers' life-style and Western motifs. When Ossie, Tito and Tir na nOg shelter overnight in a small-town picture house towards the end of their journey, the film which runs when they fiddle with the projector is another example of the genre; the horse's giant shadow across the screen suggests a reciprocity between the two worlds, and the cinema itself seems to belong to a Western set.

Newell's achievement is to give the horse a snorting, clattering physical presence to match the weight of myth and metaphor it carries, and filling the screen with expanses of dilating nostril or watery eye to create an uncanny semblance of equine acting. But as the film settles down into a repetitive rural chase, it offers diminishing returns. Byrne is believable in both tower block and tent, but the carefully realised authenticity of the travellers' milieu is unbalanced by the presence of Ellen Barkin as Kathleen, her personal make-up artist all too clearly in tow and her sexual chemistry with real-life husband Byrne simmering at all the wrong moments. "The boys need a mother", she tells him. In an ironic reversal, *Into the West* proves not to be a paean to the nomadic life after all but to the domestic stability the travellers' traditional values are made to represent.

Nor is Sheridan's script an entirely corn-free zone. "Are the travellers cow-boys or Indians, Papa?" shrewd Tito asks towards the end. The cop-out reply now that a happy ending looms recalls the lame maxims of television's *The Wonder Years*: "There's a bit of traveller in everybody, Tito. Only a few of us know where we're going".

Claire Monk

L.627

France 1992

Director: Bertrand Tavernier

Certificate 15	Didier Castello Willy
Distributor Artificial Eye	Isabelle Noah Philomène
Production Company Little Bear	Shériff Scouri Norredine
Executive Producer Frédéric Bourboulon	John Arnold Addict "L.627"
Co-producer Alain Sarde	Jeanne Dubois School Director
Production Executives Agnès Le Pont Cécile Cabel	Patrick Rocca Division Inspector Caron
Production Co-ordinator Catherine Pierrat	Eric Dufay Mr Propre
Production Managers Christine Raspillere Jacques Lacour	Francis Lax Commisar
Location Manager Sebastien Deux	Adrienne Bonnet Receptionist
Casting Daniel Mallet Bobby Pacha	Alain Ferot Man in Hat
Assistant Directors Tristan Ganne Albane Guilhe Norbert Gérard Karim Nait Mammar Karim Canama Gabriel Laferrier	Inspecteur Antillais Thierry Desroses
Screenplay Michel Alexandre	Fabrice Roux Toulouse
Director of Photography Alain Choquart In colour	Smail Mekki Miloud Amrani
Camera Operator Jean-Marie Dreujou	Bruno Raffaelli Inspector Ricard
Editor Ariane Boeglin	Jacques Boudet Raymond
Production Designer Guy-Claude François	Jacques Rosny Tulipe 4
Set Decorators Marie-Pierre Mercier- Bourboulon	Cyliane Guy African
Music Philippe Sarde	Laurentine Milebo Alimata
Orchestrations Hubert Bougis	Alain Lechaux Chief Brigadier
Costume Design Jacqueline Moreau	François Levantal Inspector of Police
Wardrobe Monique Dury-Tholy Agnès Evein	Jean Le Mouel Aussenac
Make-up Chief: Agnès Tassel Pascale Bouquiere Annie Habans Odile Fourquin	Denis Cherer Minister
Sound Editor Khadicha Bariha- Simsolo	Boris Napes Man in Blue Shirt
Sound Recordists Michel Desrois Jack Jullian Jean-Pierre Lelong	Frédéric Pierrot René
Music: John Timperley	Rémy Riffade Developer
Sound Re-recorderist Gérard Lamps	Luc Palun Brigadier
	Laurence Roche Pervenche
	Jean Luisi Toussaint
Cast Didier Bezace Lucien "Lulu" Marguet	Joséphine Kouam Housewife
Charlotte Kady Marie	Christian Bazir Black Rasta
Philippe Torretton Antoine	Jean Odoutan Mamadou Diop
Nils Tavernier Vincent	Idriss Lanrichi Hotel Manager
Jean-Paul Comart Dominique "Dodo" Cantoni	Alexandra Scherpereel Travesti
Jean-Roger Milo Manuel	Thierry Maricot European Dealer
Lara Guirao Cécile	Bruno Therasse Carpet Delivery Man
Cécile García-Fogel Kathy	Didier Harlmann Plant Delivery Man
Claude Brosset Commissioner Adore	François Lescurat Usher
Jean-Claude Calon Longuet	Gillette Barbier Old Woman
Jean-Louis Benoit Gardacier	Thien-Nga Fabre Chinese Woman
Eric Savin Inspector Lefort	Emmanuelle Bataille Spanish Woman
Hervé Laudiere Inspector Biere	Fabienne Pascaud Elegant Woman
	Jean Granger Man with Dog
	Kamel Cheriff Said
	Yasmine Abdi Tunisian
	Karen Rancurel Woman in Apartment Block
	Eugene Collombat School Caretaker
	Marcelle Barreau Old Woman Dealer

Carole Africa Prostitute	Hassan El Barnoussi Old Arab
Jean-Charles Dumay Man at Undertaker's	Dany Logan Lulu's Mother
Sylvie Van Den Elsen Corsican Woman	Simone Pheto Couliba
Frédéric Bourboulon Client Plume	Gisèle Torterolo Shot Young Girl
Françoise Miquelis Nurse	Uche Aniagolu Berthe
Amandine Chelon Moaning Woman	Fathia Said Malika
Bobby Pacha Café Owner	Alban Odil Italian
Michel Charvaz IML Employee	Jean-Claude Lagniez Man Falling from a Taxi-Bus
François Decaux Priest	Ben Brakhlia Cigarette Addict
Francis Girod Married Father	Corinne Nabet Young Addict Who Falls
Alain Sarde Intruder	Jean-Paul Pitolin Vomiting Dealer
Jean-Claude Mino Maître d'	Samir Bouadi Beur
Marc Peronne Accordionist	Roberto Montoya Taximan 77
Michel Alexandre Chef	Tikka Dead Senegalese Man
Jean-Luc Abel J.P	Thérèse Moumani African's Sister
Olivier Martial Rambo	Catherine Abecassis Beur's Sister
Jacques Pratoussy Mario	Didi Duprat Guitarist
Bruno Lopez Delinquent	13,138 feet
Fayçal Ghir Hotel Owner	146 minutes
Victor Ahianor Bodyguard	Subtitles

Thirty-five-year-old Lucien "Lulu" Marguet has worked for fifteen years as an investigator in the Seventh Division of the Paris Police. During a surveillance operation, Lulu makes contact with "un cousin" (police slang for informer), Willy, to gather information about a forthcoming crack consignment. The stakeout is interrupted by Lulu's superior, who calls in the one observation vehicle at Lulu's disposal before the operation can be completed. Furious, Lulu returns to headquarters where he accuses his chief of drunken incompetence. As a result, he is transferred to a desk job at another station.

While in clerical limbo, Lulu receives a call from another 'cousin', Cécile, a young drug-addicted prostitute who is HIV-positive, and for whom Lulu feels a protective affection. They arrange to meet at the Père-Lachaise cemetery where, facing a memorial stone to the victims of a terrorist attack on an airliner, Lulu makes it clear to Cécile that he considers dealers to be terrorists and that they should be dealt with accordingly. Through the intervention of Commissioner Adore, Lulu is transferred to a neighbouring division where he is integrated into a newly established team dealing exclusively with drug-related crime.

The chief of "les stupes" (from the French for narcotics, *stupefiants*), Dominique "Dodo" Cantoni, is concerned more with filling a quota of convictions than with the penetration of trafficking rings. In the course of a series of raids, Lulu discovers that his commitment is at odds with the lackadaisical approaches of Dodo and his colleague Manuel, but he is supported by Marie, the deputy-chief, and Antoine, who becomes Lulu's partner. The differences within the group come to a head when Dodo, Manuel and Vincent, the youngest 'stupe' and a police-

college graduate, carry out a raid on a squat without their colleagues' knowledge. Although intended to net a dealer, the raid succeeds only in unearthing a user, a young immigrant mother, whom Dodo arrests. Lulu and Antoine hurry to the scene where they attempt to placate the inhabitants, while berating Dodo.

Soon afterwards, Lulu learns that Willy, his key informant, is hiding in fear for his life. Lulu seeks him out to assure him of his protection, but later learns that Willy has suffered a savage knife attack after his whereabouts is divulged by Dodo to a gang of dealers. Still in pursuit of the same dealers, the team is staking out a café when Lulu, inside an observation van, spots Cécile on the street. Having been unable to locate her for over a year, Lulu abandons his post to speak to her. She is with her new-born child and informs Lulu that she intends to leave Paris. The team is about to set out after the dealers, and Lulu, hurriedly bidding Cécile goodbye, rejoins them. Back in the van, he realises that he has forgotten to ask Cécile for her new address.

Taking its title from the article of the French Code of Public Health that forbids "all offences linked to the possession, traffic and consumption of narcotics", *L.627* was co-written by an ex-'stupe', Michel Alexandre, whose collaboration presumably ensures an authenticity of detail and tone in the film's study of Parisian plain-clothes drug investigators. Released in France the same week as the Maastricht Referendum, Tavernier's film is an ambitious examination of 'the state of the nation' in the guise of a *policier*. As such, *L.627* occupies the same territory as Bob Swaim's *La Balance* (1982), Maurice Pialat's *Police* (1982) and Catherine Breillat's *Sale comme un ange* (1991), although it is, by comparison, occupied by resolutely 'second-string' performers.

Didier Bezace is outstanding as Lulu, the tenacious and committed investigator whose calm resourcefulness and often sentimental attachment to his 'cousins' succeeds where the blustering tactics of the team's chief, "Dodo" Cantoni – played by Jean-

Paul Comart as an overgrown adolescent, complete with hyena cackle and water pistol – fail to do anything other than fulfil the statistical requirements imposed by the Ministry of the Interior. This casting strategy is of a piece with the film's overall style, which opts for an anti-climactic, quasi-behaviourist realism, which concentrates on context and milieu rather than on a lone-vigilante cop.

Doggedly unglamorous, both in terms of character and location, *L.627* studies police procedure at the desk, on the street, in interrogations, and has several strong set-pieces, all of them emphatically focused on the work of surveillance and raids. Tavernier adopts the point of view of the police, a tactic carried over from his previous film *La Guerre sans nom* (1991), a documentary on the Algerian War seen from the perspective of French soldiers. But he does so unindulgently, concentrating on "les stupes" as a unit existing between official indifference and street-level trauma.

What defines *L.627*'s realist method – as well as its shortcomings – is Lulu's video-camera. Used off-duty to film weddings, it becomes an instrument of surveillance on stakeouts. The video images mark a kind of zero-degree realism that the film can only aspire to and approximate in a scrupulous and unflinching pursuit of the authentic details of street-level police procedure. The video image acts as a reflexive comment on the difficulties of simplicity, a directorial acknowledgement of the drawbacks of realism.

Tavernier's method is, on the whole, judicious; putting the hot subject of drugs, and the racial networks associated with them, in the 'cool' frame of a procedural *policier*. When Lulu comments, "I have the impression that filming helps me understand things better", it is tempting to take this as the director's own statement of intent – that audiences will confront their prejudices through his film. *L.627* is a consciously micro-political exploration of urban France at a point when the grand idea of 'Europe' no longer conceals the absence of political will to deal with domestic social devastation.

Chris Darke



Zero-degree realism: Didier Bezace, Lara Guirao

Of Mice and Men

USA 1992
Director: Gary Sinise

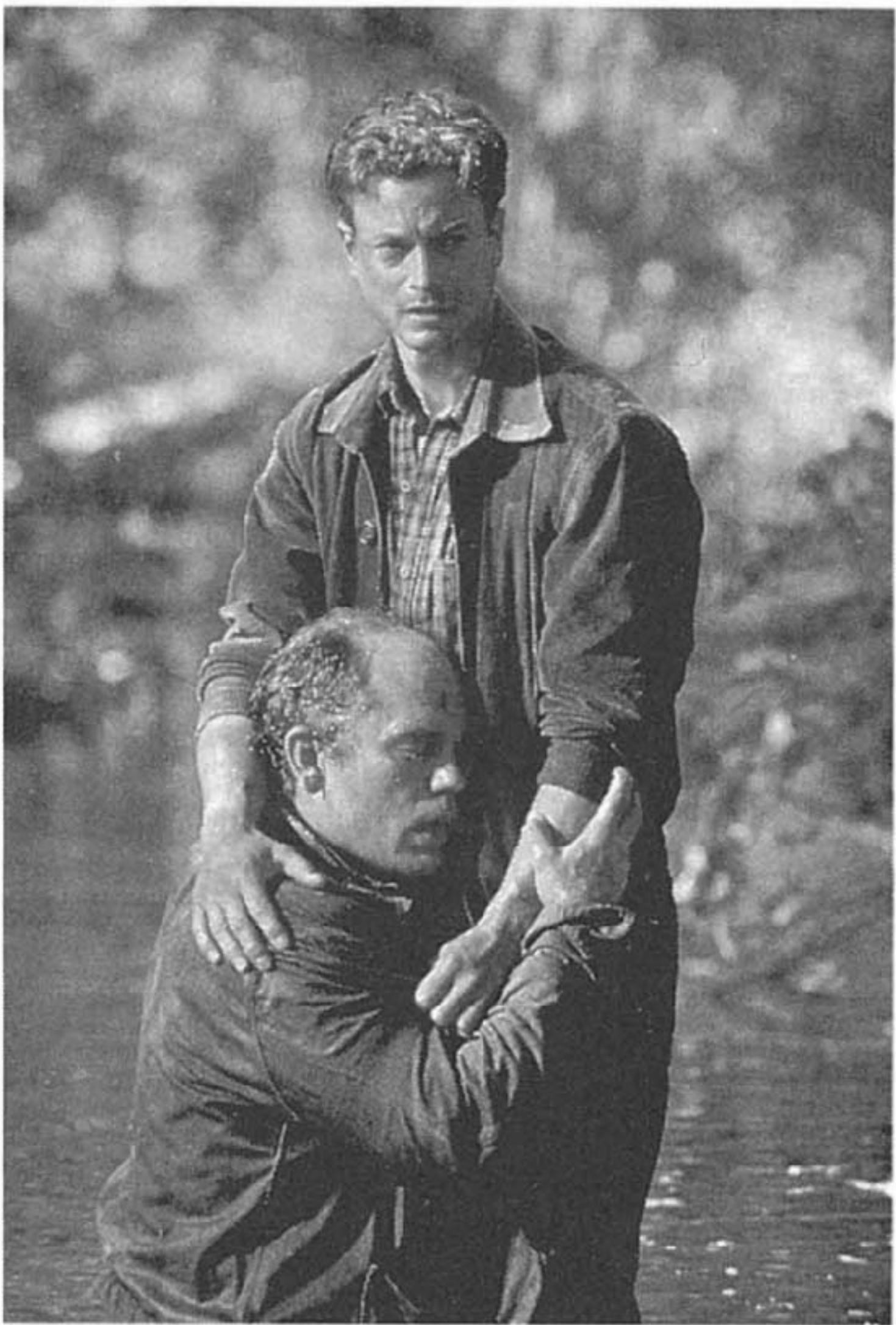
Certificate PG	Supervising Sound Editors John Phillips
Distributor UIP	Bill Phillips
Production Company MGM	Sound Editors Hal Sanders
Executive Producer Alan C. Blomquist	Pieter Hubbard
Producers Russ Smith Gary Sinise	Andy Kopetzky Christopher Todd
Production Associate Tim Christenson	ADR Editor Jimmy Ling
Production Co-ordinator Barbara A. Hall	Foley Editors David Granis
Unit Production Manager Alan C. Blomquist	Rocky Moriana Jnr
Location Manager Marshall Moore	Sound Recordists David Brownlow
Casting Amanda Mackey Cathy Sandrich	Daniel Sharp
Extras: LA Casting Express Robert Teitelbaum	Foley: Gary Hecker
Assistant Directors Cara Giallanza Michele Panelli-Venetis Andrew Miller	Music: Stephen Krause
Screenplay Horton Foote	Dolby stereo
Based on the novel by John Steinbeck	Sound Re-recordists Wayne Heitman
Director of Photography Kenneth MacMillan	Carlos de Larios
Colour DeLuxe	Joel Fein
2nd Unit Director of Photography Alan Caso	Foley Jeff Wilhoit
Camera Operator Don Reddy	Christopher Moriana
Video Playback Franklyn M. Gottbetter	Production Assistants Gerard W. Averill
Editor Robert L. Sinise	Bryan Stewart
Production Designer David Gropman	Constans
Art Director Dan Davis	Dave Higby
Set Design Cheryl T. Smith	Key Set: Adam Beason
Set Decorators Karen Schulz	Stunt Co-ordinators Edward Ulrich
Joyce Anne Gilstrap	Charles Croughwell
Set Dressers John Cenicerós	Stunts Kenneth B. Belsky
Michael A. Shapiro	Kerrie Cullen
Head Scenic Artist Harry W. Welton	Tony Jefferson
Storyboard Artist Ray Prado	Steven D. Maines
Special Effects Howard Jensen	Spiro Razatos
Music Mark Isham	Charlie Brewer
Music Director/Orchestrations Ken Kugler	Animal Trainer Paul Reynolds
Music Editor Tom Carlson	Wrangler Gordon Spencer
Music Consultants Jackie Krost	
Sharal Churchill	Cast
Costume Design Shay Cunliffe	John Malkovich
Wardrobe Supervisor: Marsha Perloff	Lennie
Set Costumer: Timothy Wegman	Gary Sinise
Make-up Artist Bonita DeHaven	George
Titles/Opticals Pacific Title	Ray Walston
	Candy
	Casey Siemaszko
	Curley
	Sherilyn Fenn
	Curley's Wife
	John Terry
	Slim
	Richard Riehle
	Carlson
	Alexis Arquette
	Whitt
	Joe Morton
	Crooks
	Noble Willingham
	The Boss
	Joed' Angerio
	Jack
	Tuck Milligan
	Mike
	David Steen
	Tom
	Moirá Harris
	Girl in Red Dress
	Mark Boone Jnr
	Bus Driver
	9,968 feet
	111 minutes

California 1930, at the height of the Depression. Two itinerant farm workers, gentle but retarded giant Lennie and his quick-witted friend George, go on the run after leaving a job in a hurry. In a new town, they find work on a ranch. The ranch owner's son Curley takes an immediate dislike to the pair and finds any excuse to start a fight with Lennie. George manages to keep his friend out of trouble, warning him to avoid Curley's bored, flirtatious wife. Lennie is an excellent worker, and earns the respect of the other hands. He and George befriend an old man, Candy, and share with him their long-cherished dream of buying their own homestead. The old man offers them all his savings if he can join them. Curley finally picks a fight with Lennie and has his fist crushed by the giant. However, ashamed of his own cowardice, Curley fails to report the incident.

Lennie has a labrador pup to which he is devoted. George warns him to be careful with the dog, but one afternoon, while the rest of the men are out in the yard throwing horseshoes, an inconsolable Lennie realises he has smothered the pup to death. Curley's wife tries to comfort him, allowing Lennie to touch her hair. When he will not let go, she panics. Alarmed, he puts his hand over her mouth to silence her and inadvertently strangles her. When Curley finds his dead wife, he immediately grabs his gun and heads out into the woods after Lennie. Meanwhile, George makes his way to a clearing where he told his friend to wait for him in case of emergency. He finds Lennie splashing about in the river. He asks him to kneel, telling him for the last time about the farm they dream of owning. George shoots Lennie in the back of the head to save him from Curley's lynch mob, then resumes his travels alone.

The best laid plans of actor/directors "gang aft agley", as Gary Sinise's version of *Of Mice and Men* proves. The film has all the right credentials: Steinbeck's widow gave permission for the project to be filmed a second time, while Oscar-winning scriptwriter Horton Foote adapted the novel. Sinise himself acted in *The Grapes of Wrath* for the renowned Chicago-based Steppenwolf Company, which he co-founded, and the presence of John Malkovich adds prestige. Nevertheless, *Of Mice and Men* is pretty lifeless.

The movie is undeniably handsome. Exhaustive attention has been paid to evoking 30s rural America, conjuring an atmosphere of dust and faded denim. At its best, the photography recalls Nestor Almendros' striking work on *Days of Heaven*, with scenes of ranch hands harvesting in golden fields of wheat (planted specially for the picture) or trundling home in their cart at twilight. And there is nothing wrong with the two central performances: Malkovich is exceptional as the gentle, retarded giant Lennie, while Sinise is neat and effective as George, his friend and protector. Indi-



Neglected role: John Malkovich, Gary Sinise

vidual scenes work well: for instance, the vivid early sequence where Lennie and George flee from unidentified pursuers, eventually hiding out in a river. Or the poignant moment when the feeble old-timer Candy (played by Broadway veteran Ray Walston) realises his beloved dog, arthritic, riddled with fleas and reeking to high heaven, is going to be shot by the other ranch hands, who can no longer bear the mutt's presence in the bunkhouse.

But the picture sags in the middle. Sinise appears in virtually every set-up, leading one to suspect that he neglected his directorial role. Lewis Milestone's 1939 version had a level of energy, humour and pathos which this tasteful, middlebrow remake lacks. Sinise treats his material too earnestly, as if it were destined for Masterpiece Theatre. The framing is often static, with the camera rooted to the spot as characters mouth their touching homilies. Thankfully, the cast, largely drawn from theatre, is strong. Casey Siemaszko as the pugnacious, bullying Curley and Randolph Scott lookalike John Terry as the ranch foreman deliver telling performances in small parts. Horton Foote has expanded Steinbeck's original tale, broadening the role of Curley's wife. We get the sense that she, like all Steinbeck's loners, is looking for companionship – her flirtations with the ranch hands are seen as her way of combating the boredom and frustration of a stale, loveless marriage. Sherilyn Fenn makes the character – referred to as "Curley's wife" throughout – at least slightly sympathetic.

In spite of this improvement, Foote must bear some responsibility for the way the film runs out of steam. Even Lennie's death, which has him shot by George as the latter rehearses their dream of owing a homestead, fails to tug at the emotions. Sinise might have been expected to imbue the picture with some of the desperation and yearning characteristic of the work of his longtime collaborator at the Steppenwolf Company, Sam Shepard. Sadly, he has delivered instead little more than a lacklustre ramble through an old favourite.

Geoffrey Macnab

The Princess and the Goblin

United Kingdom/Hungary 1992
Director: József Gémes

Certificate PG	Background Style Gizella N. Csathó
Distributor Entertainment	Background Artists David Blake
Production Companies Siriol (London)/ Pannonia Film Company (Budapest)	Errol Bryant Gizella N. Csathó Gizella Neuberger
In association with S4C Wales/ NHK Enterprises	Timea Orepka Mike Wall
Executive Producers Steve Walsh	Pre-production Visualisation Mike Wall
Marietta Dárdai	Storyboard Andrew Offler
Producer Robin Lyons	Wayne Thomas
Line Producer Emöke Marsovsky	Lettering Istvan Orosz
Production Co-ordinators Lóránd Poich Magdolna Sebestyén	Special Effects Zsuzsanna Bulyiki Piroska Martsa
Production Manager Pete Turner	Editor Magda Hap
Screenplay Robin Lyons	Music István Lerch
Based on the novel by George MacDonald	Music Director Gyula Jármai
Photography Arpad Lessecry	Music Performed by WYX Symphony Orchestra
Gyergy Verga	Orchestrations János Novák
Ede Pagner	Song "A Spark Inside Us"
Nick Smith	by Chris Stuart, Robin Lyons, performed by Paul Keating,
Pete Turner	Sally Ann Marsh, Pendyrus Male Choir
Steve Turner	Titles Gerraldo Emmanuel
Andreas Klawnsz	Terry C. Evans
In colour	Supervising Sound Editor Imre András Nyerges
Animation Director Les Orton	Sound Editor John Griffiths
Key Animators Katslin Binki	Sound Recordist Clive Pendry
Lloyd Sutton	Foley Recordist Ted Swanscott
Dimitre Bikslöv	Dolby stereo
Chris Webster	Foley Artist Julie Ankerson
Zoltan Madarász	Dialogue Consultant Judy Rothman
Rick Villeneuve	
Edit Szalay	Voices
John Miller	Joss Ackland
Evgueni Linkov	Claire Bloom
Hugh Workman	Roy Kinnear
László Adim	Sally Ann Marsh
Stuart Selkirk	Rik Mayall
Magda Kecskés	Peggy Mount
Charlie McGrae	Peter Murray
lavor Gantchev	Victor Spinetti
Les Gibbard	Mollie Sugden
Yvette Sossaries	Frank Rozelaar Green
Les Orron	William Hootkins
Erzréber Nyiro	Maxine Howe
Graham Griffiths	Steve Lyons
Additional: José Solis	Robin Lyons
José Xavier	
Jack Stokes	9,968 feet
Kevin Holloy	111 minutes
Gary McGarver	
Avril Johnson	
Steve Wetton	
Jorgen Lerdam	
Michael Hegmar	
Brendt Nielson	
Alan Green	
Character Design Richard Fawdry	
László Adám	
Katalin Bánki	
Layouts József Gémes	
Additional: Sue Butterworth	
David Elsin	
Tony Ely	
Peter Berk	
Wayne Thomas	
Marek Frittinger	

● In a mythical kingdom, King Papa lives in a castle with his daughter, Princess Irene. While the king is away on business, Irene gets lost in a nearby forest and encounters menacing creatures, the Cobs, who try to steal her cat, Turnip. They are saved by Curdie, a young miner's son, who reveals that both the Cobs and their owners, the Goblins, are repelled by singing. Later, back at the castle, Irene meets her great-great-grandmother, who has mystical powers and warns Irene not to be afraid of an imminent danger.

Curdie, meanwhile, gets lost underground while working in the mine, and discovers the Goblins' secret plot to flood the mine. Irene receives a magic ring and thread from her grandmother which will always lead her to safety. When Curdie returns to the mine a second time, he is captured after learning of the Goblins' plan to kidnap Princess Irene and marry her to the loathsome Prince Frogflip so that he can usurp her father's power. Using the magic thread, Irene ventures into the underworld and rescues Curdie, and together they return to the castle to warn everyone.

Curdie is accidentally injured by two guards, and the warning is not conveyed until it is too late. The castle is besieged by Goblins, and Irene is captured. Curdie, magically healed by the grandmother, helps the guards to fight off the Goblins, who have also attempted unsuccessfully to flood the mine and the castle. In the midst of the deluge, Curdie rescues Irene from the clutches of Prince Frogflip, and is rewarded with a kiss. Everyone lives happily ever after.

● *The Princess and the Goblin* is a My Little Pony of a movie, and about as enjoyable as the film of that name which was released several years ago. The preponderance of background shots and static tableaux stalls the action, and suggests cost-cutting measures to save on cel animation. The movements of the characters are often jerky, while their sizes relative to each other change perceptibly without any *Alice in Wonderland*-type mushrooms or cakes in sight. The excellent draughtsmanship of the final flood sequence is lost in the welter of clumsy work that has preceded it.

The story itself is so predictable that one suspects its source is less "a novel by George MacDonald" than some generalised construct from Vladimir Propp's *Morphology of Folk Tales*. Even *Freddie as F.R.O.7.*, despite a similarly clumsy technical execution, had a certain charm and freshness. Despite having an accomplished Hungarian director, József Gémes, and an experienced team of European animators, *The Princess and the Goblin*, with its ersatz-Disney look, offers little hope to those who would like to see a distinctively European kind of animated feature. It will be even more unsatisfying for those looking for a good night out with the children this Christmas.

Leslie Felperin Sharman

Reservoir Dogs

USA 1991

Director: Quentin Tarantino

Certificate

18

Distributor

Rank

Production Company

Live America, Inc
A Dog Eat Dog
production

Executive Producers

Richard N. Gladstein
Ronna B. Wallace
Monte Hellman

Producer

Lawrence Bender

Co-producer

Harvey Keitel

Production Co-ordinator

Enid L. Kantor

Production Manager

Paul Hellerman

Location Manager

Billy A. Fox

Casting

Ronnie Yeskel

Associate:

Peggy Kennedy

Extras:

Star Casting

Mary Santiago

Assistant Directors

Jamie Beardsley

Francis R. Mahony III

Kelly Kiernan

Andy Spilkoman

Steven K. Thomas

Screenplay

Quentin Tarantino

Background Radio Dialogue

Quentin Tarantino

Roger Avery

Director of Photography

Andrzej Sekula

In colour

2nd Unit Photography

Alan Sherrod

Steadicam Operator

Mark Moore

Editor

Sally Menks

Production Designer

David Wasco

Set Decorator

Sandy Reynolds-Wasco

Special Effects

Larry Fioritto

Key Special Effects

Pat Domenico

Special Effects

Steve Delollis

Rick Yale

Music Supervisors

Karyn Rachtman

MCA: Kathy Nelson

Music/Songs

"Little Green Bag"

by Jan Gerbrand Visser,

Benjamino Bouwens,

performed by George

Baker Selection; "Stuck

in the Middle with

You" by Gerry Rafferty,

Joe Egan, performed

by Stealer's Wheel;

"I Gotcha" by and

performed by Joe Tex;

"Fool for Love" by and

performed by Sandy

Rogers; "Hooked on

a Feeling" by Mark

James, performed by

Blue Suede; "Coconut"

by and performed

by Harry Nilsson;

"Harvest Moon"

by Jay Joyce, performed

by Bedlam; "Magic

Carpet Ride" by

Rushton Moreve, John

Kay, performed by

Bedlam; "Wes Turned

Country" by Nikki

Bernard; "Country's

Cool" by Peter Morris;

"It's Country" by

Henrik Nielson

Costume Design

Betsy Heimann

Costume Supervisor

Mary Claire Hannan

Set Costumer

Jacqueline Aronson

Make-up Artist

Michelle Buhler

Special Make-up Effects

KNB EFX Group

Titles/Opticals

Title House, Inc

Supervising Sound Editors

Stephen H. Flick

Geoffrey G. Rubay

Sound Editors

Curt Schulkey

Chuck Smith

Dave Stone

Sound Recordists

Ken Segal

Dave Moreno

Matthew C. Belville

Mark Coffey

Foley:

Cecilia Perna

Dolby stereo

Consultant:

Steve F.B. Smith

Sound Re-recordist

Ron Bartlett

Foley

Mary Louise Rodgers

Michael A. Salvetta

Production Assistants

Wendy Baker

Moses Robinson

Scott Sampler

Elizabeth Treadwell

Post-production:

Jennifer Pyken

Stunt Co-ordinator

Ken Lesco

Stunts

Marian Green

Marcia Holley

Ken Lesco

Pat McGroarty

Animal Handler

Nicholas Toth

Cast

Harvey Keitel

Mr White [Larry]

Tim Roth

Mr Orange [Freddy]

Michael Madsen

Mr Blonde [Vic]

Chris Penn

Nice Guy Eddie

Steve Buscemi

Mr Pink

Lawrence Tierney

Joe Cabot

Randy Brooks

Holdaway

Kirk Baltz

Marvin Nash

Eddie Bunker

Mr Blue

Quentin Tarantino

Mr Brown

Rich Turner

David Steen

Tony Cosmo

Steve Polj

Sheriffs

Michael Sottile

Teddy

Robert Ruth

Shot Cop

Lawrence Bender

Young Cop

Linda Kaye

Shocked Woman

Suzanne Celeste

Shot Woman

Steven Wright

K-Billy DJ

Laurie Latham

Maria Strova

Burr Steers

Craig Hamann

Lawrence Bender

Radio Play Background

Voices

8,920 feet

99 minutes

● Crime boss Joe Cabot and his son Nice Guy Eddie draft six criminals to stage a raid on a diamond exchange. The heist men, all strangers to one another, have been given colour-coded pseudonyms: Mr White, Mr Orange, Mr Blonde, Mr Pink, Mr Blue and Mr Brown. The robbery is botched, first by Mr Blonde's shooting of several hostages and then by the appearance of tipped-off cops who shoot Mr Blue and Mr Brown. Mr White drags Mr Orange – who is wounded while stealing a car and killing its woman driver – to a warehouse where the robbers have arranged a rendezvous. Mr Pink, who has stashed the loot, also turns up, and argues with Mr White, insisting that the gang must have been betrayed by an informer. Mr Blonde arrives with Marvin Nash, a cop he has kidnapped, followed by Eddie. While Mr White and Mr Pink go off with Eddie to collect the diamonds, Mr Blonde cuts off Nash's ear and starts torturing him to death, whereupon Mr Orange, in reality an undercover cop out to get evidence against Cabot, shoots Mr Blonde dead.

The others return, and Eddie refuses to believe Mr Orange's claim that Mr Blonde was willing to sell them out because Mr Blonde has just done a prison term without implicating the Cabots. Cabot arrives and sides with Eddie against Mr Orange. Mr White, who feels responsible for Mr Orange and assumes he is not a cop because of his murder of the woman driver, pulls a gun and tries to protect the wounded man. In an exchange of shots, the Cabots are killed and Mr White and Mr Orange wounded. Mr Pink flees and is shot down by the police, who have been holding off until Joe Cabot's arrival. Mr Orange con-

fesses to Mr White that he is a cop, whereupon Mr White shoots him in the head and is in turn shot by the police.

● The enigmatically titled *Reservoir Dogs* opens with a lengthy diner scene evocative of the male bonding and pop cultural self-reflexiveness of Barry Levinson or – signalled by the hulking presence of Harvey Keitel – of early Scorsese. The colour-coded crooks, unable to talk publicly about the enterprise that has brought them together and under orders not to reveal any personal information, argue over the meaning of Madonna's "Like a Virgin" and the concept of tipping. The whiny Mr Pink fulminates at length against the latter until Joe Cabot, played with chilling brutality by Lawrence Tierney, compels him to cough up a dollar. Then, under the credits, the gang strides in slow motion to pounding 70s music, their cool shades and black suits marking them as a group despite Cabot's attempt to keep them separate from each other. Skipping the robbery itself – only seen later in scattered flashbacks which fail to confirm visually the inconsistent reports given in the dialogue – the movie straggles back to the warehouse, where the plot unfolds via the characters' contradictory accounts and their intense conflicts of loyalty and exchanges of violence.

Although its heist-gone-wrong premise is avowedly patterned on Kubrick's *The Killing*, the free-wheeling mix of generic elements and left-field characterisation in *Reservoir Dogs* is reminiscent of the crime movie subplot of Larry Cohen's *Q: The Winged Serpent*. A first feature by writer- ►



Bond of pain: Lawrence Tierney, Harvey Keitel...



...Michael Madsen, Harvey Keitel

◀ director Tarantino, who also plays Mr Brown, one of the casualties of the robbery (the other, Mr Blue, is Edward Bunker, the ex-con whose novel *No Beast So Fierce* was filmed as *Straight Time*), the movie is less concerned with the mechanics of a botched hold-up than with the theme of personal isolation embodied in master criminal Cabot. Despite his attempt to prevent the six strangers from getting to know each other, loyalties, rivalries and enmities develop within the group from the first meeting and finally lead to the destruction of all concerned. The irony is that Mr Blonde, the member whose actions do most damage to the group, is the one whose loyalty to the Cabots and the criminal community is never in question, while the genuine bond, born of shared pain, between Mr White and Mr Orange co-exists with the undercover cop's betrayal of the others.

Trickily structured and well-written enough to suggest a stage script honed by weeks of ensemble rehearsal, the film is a showcase for American male acting. Potential sore thumb Tim Roth blends in by borrowing a few tics and an accent from James Woods, while a cleverly assembled selection of perennial supporting players is given a chance at lead roles. Michael Madsen, the boyfriend from *Thelma & Louise*, Chris Penn from *At Close Range*, and Steve Buscemi, the bellhop from *Barton Fink*, all deliver distinctive performances; Madsen excels in an especially chilling sequence in which he boogies across the warehouse to the tied-up cop, admitting that he intends to torture him for pleasure. Harvey Keitel as Mr White, the most straightforward and decent of the hoods, reins in his bravura tendencies and allows his co-stars the eccentric flourishes, while Tierney as Cabot, compared in the dialogue to the comic-book character Thing, carries a freightload of genre history that goes back to *Dillinger*. An astute mix of wit and cynicism which washes down its melodramatic excesses with sly satire on the blood-and-guts elements of the crime movie, this is a film of considerable acuity and power.

Kim Newman

Soft Top, Hard Shoulder

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Stefan Schwartz

Certificate

15

Distributor

Feature Film Company

Production Company

Road Movie Productions

Producer

Richard Holmes

Co-producer

Georgia Masters

Production Manager

Giles Johnson

Location Manager

Tim Porter

Casting

Suzy Korel

Assistant Directors

Giles Johnson

Alison Begg

Claire Metteyer

Suzanne Moulou

Screenplay

Peter Capaldi

Director of Photography

Henry Braham

In colour

Camera Operator

Mark Ellis

Opticals

Westbury

Design & Optical

Editor

Derek Trigg

Production Designer

Sonja Klaus

Art Director

Alison Harvey

Music

Chris Rea

Songs

"Morningtoun Ride"

by Malvina Reynolds;

"Lil Devil"

Costume Design

Christopher Woods

Make-up

Mariska Vennema

Titles Design

Frank Wallington

The Graphic Unit

Sound Editors

Nigal Galt

Stefan Henrix

Ross Adams

Sound Recordist

Matthew Harmer

ADR/Foley Recordist

Mike Dowson

Sound Re-recordists

Brian Saunders

Edward Colyer

Production Assistant

Stephanie Crean

Cast

Peter Capaldi

Gavin Bellini

Frances Barber

Miss Trimble

Catherine Russell

Animal Rights Activist

Jeremy Northam

John

Richard Wilson

Uncle Salvatore

Elaine Collins

Yvonne

Peter Ferdinando

Homeless Youth

Sophie Hall

Nancy

Scott Hall

Mr Young

Simon Callow

Eddie Cherdowski

Phyllis Logan

Karla

Robert James

Campbell

Andrew Downie

Brodie

Ann Scott-Jones

Mrs Tutty

Lindy Whiteford

Peggy

Bill Gavin

Man in Tiny Car

Michael Nardone

Stevie

Billy McColl

Kevin the Guru

Clive Russell

Clegg

Jeremy Lee

Kate Harding

Radio Voices

8,525 feet

95 minutes

Gavin Bellini, born into an Italian-Glaswegian family, moves to London to make his name as an artist – with scant success. Broke, and pressured for the rent, he encounters his Uncle Salvatore, who reminds Gavin of his father's imminent sixtieth birthday. Gavin is unwilling to drive to Glasgow until Sal hints that, if he makes it to Sunday's party by 7.30 exactly, he may qualify for a share of the family ice-cream business fortune.

On Saturday morning, Gavin sets out in his ancient Triumph convertible. Stopped on the motorway, he meets a hitch-hiker, Yvonne, bound for Glasgow; she helps restart the car, and Gavin reluctantly gives her a lift – only to discover, miles further on, that he has lost his wallet. Trying to phone for help, he finds a gold credit card. At Yvonne's urging, they return it to its owner, ex-comedian Eddie Cherdowski, who rewards them with money for petrol.

Just into Scotland, a duel with a red Volkswagen leaves the car stranded in a ditch. A phone call to Uncle Sal brings a breakdown truck, but Gavin and Yvonne have to spend the night at a grim farmhouse. The next morning, they find the car has been returned to Sal in Glasgow, and proceed on their way by bus (catching the southbound one by mistake) and hitch. Their final lift is with a pair of delinquents in a stolen van, and on reaching Glasgow Gavin and Yvonne are arrested.

At the police station, it emerges that Yvonne is on the run from an unwelcome marriage. Released, the pair quarrel about Gavin's mercenary motives and part on bad terms. Gavin finds his car at the disused Bellini factory and arrives home at precisely 7.30 – but instead of entering goes off to find Yvonne. The couple are reconciled and Gavin takes her to his father's birthday party, where he turns down Uncle Sal's offer of money.

Peter Capaldi made his screen debut in *Local Hero*, and there's more than a hint of Bill Forsyth's influence about his first venture as screenwriter and lead actor. Indeed, *Soft Top, Hard Shoulder* tips a couple of explicit nods to Forsyth's movie – a rabbit on a deserted Scottish road, and an

isolated red phone box by the seashore – as well as borrowing the ice-cream dynasty motif from *Comfort and Joy*. Beyond that, the film shares with Forsyth its overall flavour of dry, slightly pixillated Scots humour and its edgy attitude to sexual politics. Elaine Collins' Yvonne serves, like most of Forsyth's heroines, as the movie's moral focus, far more forthright and together than its bemused hero.

If all this suggests that Capaldi and Stefan Schwartz (making his debut as director) have come up with a fairly derivative film, that wouldn't be too far from the truth. The plot, with its race against time bedevilled by circumstance, patently owes a lot to *Clockwise*, and the bickering fellow travellers who finally fall for each other have been showing up regularly ever since *It Happened One Night*. We also get the odd movie parody: there's a catastrophic showdown with a bright red Beetle, its driver invisible behind tinted glass, that takes off Spielberg's *Duel*.

But despite the multiple echoes, *Soft Top, Hard Shoulder* exerts a charm of its own. There's a wealth of enjoyably quirky detail – the duelling Beetle carries on its roof rack a huge bundle swathed in flapping black plastic – and a fine line in pawky dialogue: a request from the benighted travellers to their host for "a biscuit or something?" elicits the dour response, "My wife choked on a Penguin". And among the guest cameos, Phyllis Logan plays refreshingly against type as a greasy-overalled mechanic, joining with Yvonne in old Peter, Paul & Mary numbers.

Where the film comes oddly unstuck is over the character of Gavin himself. He starts off as an aspiring artist whose penchant for naive ghoulishness is ruining his career prospects. (A black devil mask adorns his wall, two chubby infant legs protruding from its mouth.) But once on the road, he becomes a blinkered opportunist obsessed with time and money, ripe for conversion by Yvonne to more generous values. This hardly adds up; Gavin Mark II would have readily gone along with his publisher's wish for "something a little less perverse". But then, of course, there would have been no movie.

Philip Kemp



It happened again: Peter Capaldi, Elaine Collins

Spotswood

Australia 1991

Director: Mark Joffe

Certificate

PG

Distributor

Feature Film Company

Production Companies

Australian Film Finance Corporation/
Meridian Films
In association with
Smiley Films
With financial assistance from
The Australian Film Commission/
Film Victoria

Producers

Richard Brennan
Timothy White

Production Co-ordinator

Sue Edwards

Production Manager

Bernadette O'Mahony

Unit Managers

Leigh Ammitzboll
Mike McLean

Casting

Alison Barrett Casting
Extras:

Jo Warren

Assitant Directors

Euan Keddie
Julie Burton
Tony Gilbert

Screenplay

Max Dann
Andrew Knight

Director of Photography

Ellery Ryan

In colour

Camera Operator

Clive Duncan

Editor

Nicholas Beauman

Production Designer

Chris Kennedy

Art Director

Hugh Bateup

Scenic Artist

Howard Clark

Music

Ricky Fataar

Music Arrangements/

Music Producer

Chong Lim

Music Editor

Don Miller-Robinson

Music Co-ordinator

Chris Gough

Songs

"Catch the Wind" by Donovan Leitch, performed by Donovan; "Deep in the Heart of Texas" performed by Geoff Love Ban jos; "Hey Baby" by D. Channel, M. Cobb, performed by La Deh Dah; "The Loved One" by Lowett, Clyne, Humphreys, performed by The Loved Ones; "Sick and Tired" by Konner, Bartholomew, performed by Billy Thorpe; "Who Wants to Be a Millionaire" by Cole Porter, performed by Bruno Lawrence

Costume Design

Tess Schofield

Wardrobe Supervisor

Cheyne Phillips

Standby:

Julie Barton

Make-up Artist

Wendy Sainsbury

Title Design

Libby Blainey

Supervising Sound Editor

Karin Whittington

Sound Editors

Gary O'Grady
Nick Breslin

Sound Recordists

Lloyd Carrick

Gethin Creagh

Music:

Don Miller-Robinson

Dolby stereo

Sound Re-recordist

Angus Robertson

Foley

Steve Burgess

Stunt Co-ordinator

Chris Anderson

Anthony Hopkins' Stand-in

Geoffrey O'Connell

Cast

Anthony Hopkins

Wallace

Ben Mendelsohn

Carey

Toni Collette

Wendy

Alwyn Kurts

Mr Ball

Dan Wyllie

Fletcher

Bruno Lawrence

Robert

Rebecca Rigg

Cheryl

Russell Crowe

Kim Barrett

John Walton

Finn

JohnFlaus

Gordon

Jeff Truman

Ron

Gary Adams

Kevin

Leslie Baker

Gwen

Jacob Kino

Marvin

Angela Punch McGregor

Caroline

Toni Lamond

Mrs Ball

Jillian Murray

Ophelia

Rosie Sturgess

Edna

Nathan Croft

Win

Mickey Camilleri

Elsie

Amy Rogers

Ivy

Esme Melville

Rose

Geoff Brooks

Conor McDermottroe

Salesmen

Randall Berger

Amos

Max Fairchild

Wendy's Father

Desiree Smith

Shirley

Tamara Kuldin

Cassandra

Darren Kilpatrick

Julian

George Dixon

Ron Bergman

Machinists

Judith Braham

Jean

John Farrow

Minister

Ann Rigby

Liz Rule

Girls

Robert Noble

Union Official

James Condon

Lloyd Cunningham

Executives

Billy Baxter &

The Hollowmen

Cicadas

8,514 feet

95 minutes



Passport to prosperity: Anthony Hopkins

The mid 60s. Fresh from a hard-nosed assessment at Durmack's, a Melbourne car factory, Wallace, a time and motion expert from England, is called into Ball's Moccasin Factory, a decaying concern in the suburb of Spotswood. Mr. Ball, the aged founder, treats his staff as a family; Wallace only sees a lackadaisical workforce, more obsessed with slot-car racing than the job at hand. To help him in his task, Wallace calls upon young Carey; he responds with alacrity once he realises Mr. Ball's flighty daughter Cheryl, whiling away the summer, will also be assisting.

Wallace becomes unnerved by the factory's friendly atmosphere. He suffers further disquiet when trouble flares at the Durmack factory after Finn, a devious manager, uses Wallace's report to push through a massive redundancy programme. Wallace's home life brings no comfort: his wife Caroline is poised to leave him. After Kim Barrett, Mr. Ball's ambitious sales manager, reveals that Ball has only been able to show a profit by selling off land assets, Wallace reinforces the changes already instituted, like staggering lunch hours to cut down idle chatter. His work done, Wallace tells Ball that large-scale redundancies are the only solution.

Unaware of their fate, the staff undertake repairs to Wallace's car and ask him to join in their slot-car Grand Prix; he agrees, most uneasily, and

brings them victory. When they next report to work, half of them learn they are to be laid off. At a Durmack reception, Wallace is driven to a guilty and drunken outburst, and then visits Mr. Ball's home. He tells him that he has reconsidered, and that with diversification of product, the factory can be saved. Before moving on, Wallace helps Kim to get a job at Durmack's, where his ruthless style will be best appreciated; and Carey returns to his trusty, unglamorous girlfriend Wendy.

Several recent British and Anglo-American comedies have striven to capture the Ealing spirit and failed lamentably. Downunder, however, they seem to have better luck. Mr. Ball's dilapidated but friendly moccasin factory in Spotswood, Melbourne, can take its place alongside the Greenleaf brewery of the prototype Ealing comedy *Cheer Boys Cheer* (1939), the Scottish tweed company of *The Battle of the Sexes* (made by Ealing personnel in 1959), and the many eccentric cottage industries scattered in between, all fighting the good fight against bureaucracy. Like *Spotswood*, *The Battle of the Sexes* featured an imported efficiency expert, trying to bring an archaic business into the modern era. After Constance Cummings' smart American, we now get Anthony Hopkins – taking a well-earned break from gimlet-eyed psychopaths as Wallace, the remote English time and motion man, happy

with figures and spreadsheets but miserably out of his depth with people.

Spotswood, however, is no simple essay in cinematic nostalgia. "People need to make things", the aged, avuncular Mr. Ball pleads as Wallace proposes to sweep his workforce away. At a time of recession and mass unemployment, Mark Joffe's endearing film – crafted more neatly than any of Mr. Ball's unsaleable moccasins – presents a cheerful message to the world, and does so without tottering over into fantasy. Working within Chris Kennedy's wonderfully detailed factory set, the cast create a convincing gallery of human types, from Alwyn Kurts' sweet, avuncular factory owner and Ben Mendelsohn's naive love-sick youth to the overgrown boys on the factory floor, their minds preoccupied by the slot-car racing Grand Prix.

The script's basic battle between soulless big business and the quirky individual springs no surprises. But Joffe, a television director with one previous feature to his name (a 1988 thriller, *Grievous Bodily Harm*), stages the battle so pleasingly that only a grouch could complain. He casts an imaginative eye on *Spotswood*'s glum landscape, and never lets Hopkins overwhelm the Australian cast. This is a gentle comedy, but it lingers in the mind long after most blunderbuss films have roared through the cinemas.

Geoff Brown

Tous les matins du monde

France 1992

Director: Alain Corneau

Certificate
12
Distributor
Electric Pictures
Production Companies
Film Par Film/
D. D. Productions/
Divali Films/Sedif/FR3
Films Production/
C. N. C./Canal Plus/
Paravision
International
Producer
Jean-Louis Livi
Production Manager
Bernard Marescot
Location Managers
Jean Cirla
Valerie LeBlanc
Alexandre Putman
Casting
Pascale Beraud
Assistant Directors
Jerome Navarro
Hiromi Rollin
Gilles Loutfi
Screenplay
Pascal Quignard
Alain Corneau
Based on the novel
by Pascal Quignard
Director of Photography
Yves Angelo
In colour
Editor
Marie-Josophe Yoyotte
Set Design
Bernard Vezat
Music
Jordi Savall
Music Extracts
Improvisation of
"Les Folies d'Espagne",
"L'arabesque",
"Le Badinage",
"La rèveuse" by Marin
Marais; "Marche pour
la cérémonie des
Turcs" by Jean-Baptiste
Lully; "Troisième Leçon
de Ténèbres à deux
voix" by François
Couperin; "Prelude
pour Monsieur
Vanquelin" by Jordi
Savall; "Une jeune
fillette", "Fantaisie en
mi mineur" arranged
by Jordi Savall
Music Performed by
Bass Viol:
Jordi Savall
Christophe Coin
Sopranos:
Montserrat Figueras
Maria-Cristina Kiehr
Théorbe:
Rolf Lislevand
Harpsichord:
Pierre Hantai
Le Concert des Nations
Costume Design
Corinne Jorry
Wardrobe
Hélène Robin
Gil Noir
Make-up
Jean-Pierre Eychenne
Marianne Collette
Sound Editor
Pierre Gamet
Sound Recordists
Gérard Lamps
Anne Le Champion
Music: Pierre Verany
Dolby stereo
Sound Effects
Laurent Levy
Françoise Lepeuple
Musical Consultant
Professor Jean-Louis
Charbonnier
Subtitles
A. Whitelaw
W. Byron

Cast
Jean-Pierre Marielle
Monsieur de Sainte
Colombe
Gérard Depardieu
Marin Marais
Anne Brochet
Madeleine
Guillaume Depardieu
Young Marin Marais
Caroline Sihol
Madame de Sainte
Colombe
Carole Richert
Toinette
Violaine Lacroix
Young Madeleine
Nadege Teron
Young Toinette
Myriam Boyer
Guignotte
Jean-Claude Dreyfus
Abbé Mathieu
Yves Lambrecht
Chabonnières
Michel Bouquet
Baugin
Jean-Marie Poirier
Monsieur de Bures
Philippe Duclos
Voice of Brunet
Yves Gourvil
Voice of Lequieu

10,348 feet
115 minutes

Subtitles

Rehearsing the king's musicians at Versailles, the elderly Marin Marais halts the proceedings to reminisce ashamedly about his musical mentor, Monsieur de Sainte Colombe... Rising star and innovator of the viol, Sainte Colombe returns home from a performance at a friend's deathbed only to find that his wife has died. Devastated, he withdraws from the world, devoting his time to perfecting his musical ability and, to a markedly lesser extent, raising his young daughters, Madeleine and Toinette, who are taught to play the viol.

The family's fame as virtuosos soon reaches the Royal Court, prompting invitations to perform. Sainte Colombe flatly rejects these and continues his ascetic existence. Practising fifteen hours a day in a small cabin in his garden, he pushes himself even further, occasionally 'visited' by the spirit of his beloved wife. Marin arrives one day to be taken on as a student: only seventeen, the son of a cobbler, he has already surpassed his teachers in ability. Sainte Colombe is impressed by the young man's anger and passion, but dismisses his performance as superficial virtuosity. Relenting under his daughters' entreaties, Sainte Colombe takes Marin on, and a difficult master/pupil relationship begins; simultaneously, an affair develops between Marin and Madeleine.

When he hears that his pupil has performed at the Royal Court, Sainte Colombe destroys Marin's viol and banishes him from the house. In secret, however, he continues to visit Madeleine, who continues his tutelage as well as their affair. But the Court, with its ostentatious dress and promise of celebrity, continues to draw Marin. He abandons Madeleine and in turn Sainte Colombe's higher ideals of inspiration and musicianship. Madeleine, now pregnant, gives birth to a still-born child and remains permanently and bitterly confined to bed.

Years pass, and Marin, now portly and famous, is summoned to Madeleine's deathbed to play a composition he once wrote for her. Scorning his foppish appearance, she berates him and, once he has left, unearths an old gift of shoes in order to hang herself by one of the ribbons. Marin secretly begins to eavesdrop outside the cabin by night, hoping to hear his master play, to learn again, but all Sainte Colombe does is mutter to himself. Overhearing his lament one night about the lack of someone just to talk about music with, Marin knocks on the door. The lessons start again... Sitting grief-stricken in the rehearsal room at Versailles, the elderly Marin is visited by an apparition of Sainte Colombe, who tells him of the pride he felt in having him as a pupil; Marin is consoled.

Costume dramas seem synonymous with excess; they are dressed for the lens and display themselves with the self-assuredness of being History. *Tous les matins du monde* consciously sets itself up differently:



A face and its history: Gérard Depardieu

opening with a five-minute tight close-up of Gérard Depardieu's face, raddled with age, while he conducts musicians within an unseen Palace of Versailles, its concern is less with the Past than a past. Taking its joint leads (Depardieu and Anne Brochet) from Rappeneau's *Cyrano de Bergerac*, it has, as it were, internalised its epic production values, as a kind of 'present absence', and conducts its intensely localised drama with the reserve and detachment of its protagonist.

Like Frank in *Série noire*, Willie in *Le Mome*, or the anonymous 'Man' in *Nocturne indien*, Sainte Colombe is another of Alain Corneau's marginalised anti-heroes shifted to centre stage. His opposite and complement is the equally gifted Marin Marais, who chooses the path of material reward by integrating himself with Court society. Forever playing the errant pupil/son, Marin's worldliness is registered in the foppishness of his courtly dress and in his physical ageing, the role abruptly relayed from Depardieu son to father. Madeleine and her father, however, remain outside time in their house-bound ascetic suffering; another lick of hollowing eye shadow for her, a few more white hairs for him, the Sainte (sic) Colombes are immutable.

It's their outsider status that shapes the film's narrative. Marais appears only as a visitor, his Court and family life, like Toinette's marriage, is alluded to but never depicted. This enclosure is further intensified with Sainte Colombe and Madeleine's respective retreats to cabin and bed. It's a containment that is carried over in the way space is depicted beyond the domestic sphere: the king's musicians, when momentarily glimpsed, are squeezed within the frame in a *tableau vivant*; the aged Marais' face pushes against the edges of the screen; and Sainte Colombe's one visual indulgence, a still life by Baugin, consists of a detail from the table in his cramped cabin. Denied

a perspective on what is/will be/has been happening beyond that garden (and in turn the extra pleasure of being able to 'place' events, world historical and otherwise), the audience is obliged to occupy an equivalent position on the margins.

Adapted from Pascal Quignard's novel, *Tous les matins* is based on the real-life relationship between these musicians. But the contrast between these two stock versions of 'genius' avoids bio-pic simplicities. In belittling Marin's talent – though possibly greater than his own – Sainte Colombe seeks to justify his 'devotional' detachment from society; Marin, though deeply anguished in his later years by the pain of remembering, seems easily salvaged by an appeal to his musical vanity. Madeleine, caught between the two, is the one who is ultimately made to suffer for their art. Even Baugin, whose style is consciously alluded to in cinematographer Yves Angelo's dimly lit, formally composed interiors, puts in a cameo as a surly and self-absorbed materialist. Great works don't mean great men, seems to be the message.

At the centre, balanced between sensual and visionary status, is the Baroque music, the collective *raison d'être*. Corneau, a long-time devotee and commissioner of the original novel, lets his enthusiasm shine through and to an extent mythologises personalities. The self-consciously reputable cast and the painterly *mise en scène* invest even the most low-key moments with a sumptuous high-art sheen. Though low-key compared to what might have been (enactments of Marais' operas, Louis Quatorze flouncing about Versailles, etc.), there's still a sense of grandeur that jars with what, in the script, is an agoraphobic family melodrama. But without this cast, there wouldn't be that face occupying the whole screen, static, wordlessly lamenting a life.

Paul Tarrago

TV FILM

Ghostwatch

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Lesley Manning

Distributor	Cast
BBCTV	Michael Parkinson
Production Company	Presenter
BBC Films	Sarah Greene
For Screen One	Reporter
Executive Producer	Mike Smith
Richard Broke	Phone-in Presenter
Producer	Craig Charles
Ruth Baumgarten	Interviewer
Associate Producer	Gillian Bevan
Derek Nelson	Dr Lin Pascoe
Production Manager	Brid Brennan
Jacmel Dent	Pamela Early
Location Manager	Michelle Wesson
Kate Power	Suzanne Early
Casting Adviser	Cherise Wesson
Michelle Guish	Kim Early
Screenplay	Chris Miller
Stephen Volk	Cameraman
In colour	Mike Aiton
Camera Operator	Sound Recordist
2nd Unit:	Mark Lewis
Dave Hill	Alan Demescu
Visual Effects	Linda Broughton
Steve Bowman	Yvonne Etherly
Video Effects	Katherine Stark
Dave Jervis	Wendy Stott
Graphic Design	Derek Smea
Iain MacDonald	Arthur Lacey
Editor	Roger Tebb
Chris Swanton	Local TV Presenter
Production Designer	Colin Stinton
Ken Starkey	Dr Emilio Sylvestri
Music	Keith Ferrari
Philip Appleby	Ghost
Costume Design	Ruth Sheen
Jackie Vernon	Emma Stableford
Make-up Design	Diana Blackburn
Caroline Noble	Sandra Hughes
Sound Design	Brendan O'Hea
Winston Ryder	Kevin Tripp
Sound Supervisor	Mark Drewry
Alan Machin	Anonymous Man
Psychic Consultant	
Guy Lyon Playfair	
	8,910 feet
	(at 25 fps) 95 minutes

● Halloween. On *Ghostwatch*, a live programme dealing with the supernatural, Michael Parkinson interviews parapsychologist Dr Lin Pascoe while Mike Smith mans a phone-in and solicits viewers' opinions and experiences. Sarah Greene and Craig Charles are doing an outside broadcast from Northolt, at the home of Mrs Pamela Early in Foxhill Drive, where Dr Pascoe and her team have observed extensive poltergeist activity centred on Mrs Early's daughters, Suzanne and Kim. When a tape of an earlier incident in the girls' bedroom is broadcast, viewers claim to have seen a figure in the shadows.

While Parkinson interviews Dr Pascoe about the haunting, Sarah is inside the house with her camera crew, observing minor disputed phenomena like scratching noises and damp patches. When a loud knocking is heard, a camera catches Suzanne pounding on a door, prompting Parkinson to dismiss the whole thing as a hoax. The girl justifies herself by claiming she was only doing what the television people wanted and Dr Pascoe says many phenomena remain unexplained. Suzanne is then stricken with a fever, manifests cat scratches on her face, and speaks, as she has before, in a different voice.

Distressed viewers call to allege that they have experienced phenomena in their homes while watching, and one

reveals that there was a nineteenth-century bogeywoman in Northolt, a baby-farmer named Mother Seddons. Things go seriously wrong in Foxhill Drive and the TV link is cut off during frenzied poltergeist activity. Another caller reveals that the house was the site of the suicide of Raymond Tunstell, a child molester who seems to have been haunted by Mother Seddons and killed himself in a glory hole under the stairs where the ghostliness is centred.

The link with the house is resumed, but in the confusion Sarah and Suzanne are trapped inside, Suzanne in the glory hole with the ghost of Tunstell. Phenomena erupt in the studio and Dr Pascoe suggests that the live TV show has acted as a giant seance, channelling the supernatural throughout the country. The studio blacks out and the crew flee, leaving Parkinson alone with the autocue, which repeats phrases the ghost spoke through Suzanne.

● Venturing into the fake documentary mode recently popularised by *This Is Spinal Tap* and *Man Bites Dog*, the BBC's Halloween Trick or Treat combines the format of a news show with a fictional story. Adding somewhat to the credibility is its use of the semi-tabloid style of such popular programmes as *Crimewatch*, which already venture into a disturbing area between entertainment and information. The film boasts all the apparatus of such shows, from the flashed-up telephone number interested punters are supposed to call to the occasionally dodgy technical links between the safety of the studio and the supposed psychic battleground of Foxhill Drive.

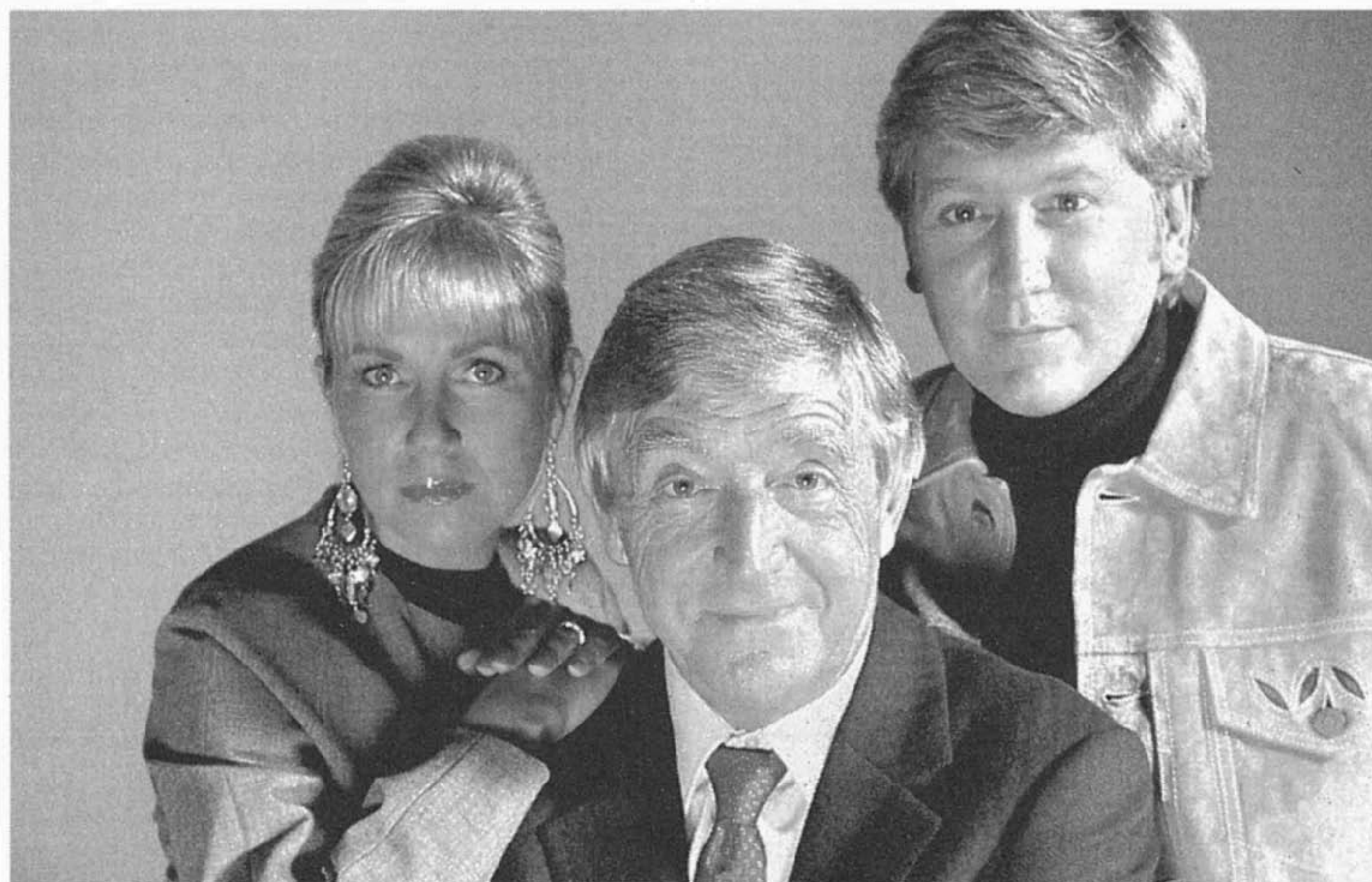
The most interesting and effective aspect of Stephen Volk's script is its borrowing from the works of Nigel Kneale (most notably *The Stone Tape* and *Quatermass and the Pit*). A standard ghostly mystery is peeled of its onion-layers as more and more nuggets of factual information accrue, through the slightly too convenient device of the phone-in callers who provide information about the possible origins of the haunting that has somehow eluded Dr Pascoe's researchers and, presumably, the BBC team who have set up the programme we are supposed to be watch-

ing. As in *The Stone Tape*, we are presented with a series of cumulative hauntings, each generation's evil piled upon the next until the modern sensitive (here, Suzanne) is drawn in, perhaps to become a ghost herself.

As in Kneale's uncredited script for *Halloween III: Season of the Witch*, television itself is called into play as a literal medium, supposedly spreading the poltergeist phenomena into the homes of the viewing public, a device which predictably excited much criticism and complaint among the more gullible members of the real audience. In a rare and dangerous stratagem, Volk and director Lesley Manning repeatedly violate the fourth wall, bringing the terrors of Foxhill Drive to the comfortable studio from which Michael Parkinson (playing himself as he did in his last acting role, in *Madhouse*) tries to control the drama, and then - through bemused or hysterical phone-in tales of spinning plates and exploded tables - to the public at large. Unfortunately, the film relies on the old favourite supernatural trickery of mysterious winds, exploding lightbulbs and flying objects, although the implications of Suzanne's entrapment in the glory hole with the ghost of a child molester are unusually strong for a television horror movie.

Most debate about the show has focused on the moot point of how 'convincing' it was. Slightly awkward performances demonstrate how difficult it is for television presenters to play themselves in a dramatic context, and for actors to pretend to be the kind of experts and innocents familiar from actuality programmes. Or they may be proof that the film-makers always intended (as suggested by Craig Charles' sly send-up of his own image, playing himself as an obnoxious and insensitive exploiter) to keep the whole charade from becoming too seriously frightening. However, *Ghostwatch* is in the main surprisingly free of the brand of humour that might be expected from such an exercise, marking an unusual and refreshing attempt to be as purely frightening as television was willing to be in the 60s and 70s, paying attention to an area that has been sadly curtailed since Mary Whitehouse first complained about *Dr. Who*.

Kim Newman



The Halloween home team: Sarah Greene, Michael Parkinson, Mike Smith

TV FILM

The Hummingbird Tree

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Noella Smith

Distributor	Cast
BBCTV	Patrick Bergin
Production Company	Stephen Holmes
BBC Television	Susan Wooldridge
In association with	Marjorie Holmes
BBC Enterprises	Tom Beasley
Executive Producer	Alan Holmes
Richard Broke	DeshaPenco
Producer	Jaillin
Gub Neal	Sunil Y Ramjitsingh
Associate Producer	Kaiser
Ian Hopkins	Valerie Laurent Stevens
Production Manager	Alice
Elizabeth Seedansingh	Clive Wood
Location Manager	Tom Ross
Karen Martinez	Rebecca Aldred
Casting	Judy Ross
UK:	Bret Kenny
Marilyn Johnson	Tanner Evans
Trinidad:	Kirk Collins
Christine Johnstone	Lee Ross
Assistant Directors	Amy Lazzari
Paul Judges	Maggie
Melanie Panario	Damien Farah
Brenda Hughes	Tom
Screenplay	Charles Applewaite
Jonathan Falla	Roger Roberts
Based on the novel	Joseph Gilbert
by Ian McDonald	Speakers
Director of Photography	David Sammy
Remi Adefarasin	Old Boss
In colour	Shane D. Lyons
Graphic Design	Baseball
Jane Walker	Simon Bedasie
Editor	Wool
Mark Day	Azard Daniel
Production Designer	Ramlal
Tony Burroughs	Niall Buggy
Art Director	Priest
John Hill	Marston Bloom
Music	Alan, age 18
John Keane	Perry Polar
Costume Design	Kaiser, age 21
Pat Godfrey	Rosemarie Gajar
Make-up Design	Jaillin, age 18
Francis Hannon	Panjammers & Marsicans
Sound Editors	Carnival Steelbands
Debbie Pragnell	
Jane Greenwood	
Sound Recordist	
Graham Ross	
Sound Re-recordist	
Aard Wirtz	
	7,600 feet
	(at 25 fps) 81 minutes

● Trinidad, 1946, in the lead-up to the country's first democratic election. Twelve-year-old Alan Holmes is the son of Stephen and Marjorie, an English Catholic family who have lived on the island for several generations and own a local factory. Alan has befriended the two young East Indian servants, brother and sister Kaiser and Jaillin, although his parents prefer him to play with other English children and do not allow him to invite his 'special' friends to his birthday party. At the party, the Holmes' friend Tom Ross, an anti-independence candidate, asks for their support in the forthcoming election.

On a visit to the capital, Port of Spain, Alan and Kaiser hear the speeches of the pro-independence campaigners. On the same trip, Alan spies his mother secretly meeting Ross. Alan has meanwhile fallen in love with Jaillin and writes her a letter, although Kaiser teases him and tells him that she cannot read. Alan becomes a regular visitor to Kaiser and Jaillin's village, and as he returns home one night, he witnesses the burning of the cane fields in an arson attack. On a visit ►

◀ to his father's factory, Alan hears him discuss politics with Ross; Holmes views independence as a potentially positive thing. Alan later witnesses a cock fight in Kaiser and Jaillin's village, and Jaillin reacts angrily to his disapproval.

As the election approaches, the Holmes family go to their seaside residence, taking Kaiser and Jaillin with them. While Stephen and Marjorie return to the city to vote, Alan goes to Sunday mass, accompanied, out of curiosity, by Jaillin. But she leaves when the priest delivers a sermon full of hate for the Hindu population. Later, Alan is reprimanded by his parents for taking her, and he retaliates with a comment about his mother and Ross. Allowed to go fishing at night with Kaiser, Alan runs off with Jaillin and, against his parents' orders, goes swimming in one of the lagoons. When he fails to return by bedtime, Stephen goes looking for him; Kaiser tries to warn Alan and Jaillin, but they are found and punished.

In the election results, it is announced that the seat Ross was standing for has been won by the Indian candidate. The next day, Kaiser and Jaillin are sacked and sent home. Six years later, Alan bumps into a drunken Kaiser during carnival celebrations. Alan has just returned from public school in England, while Kaiser has been educated at a Catholic school and converted to the religion. Alan drives Kaiser home and he meets Jaillin again. She tells him that she was in love with him, but now turns her back on white men.

● *The Hummingbird Tree* is the 'Screen One' special for Christmas, and the publicity notes – which emphasise that it is the first BBC feature to be shot entirely on location "in the exotic island of Trinidad", with its "vibrant and intoxicating atmosphere" – imply that it is the BBC's ticket to paradise, a flight away from the dull English weather and too much turkey stuffing. Thankfully, though there is a measure of predictability in its approach to the subject of a once colonised country coming of age, this adaptation of Trinidadian writer Ian McDonald's novel is more than lush locations.

Like Clare Denis' *Chocolat*, which

dealt with the legacy of colonialism in the Cameroons, the film adopts a child's point of view of the various upheavals as Trinidad moved towards becoming a republic. The notion of a progress from innocence to experience is implicitly tied up with a country's shift from colonialism to independence. But here the dichotomy is ambiguous. For a country, this rite of passage should be a positive one, from the rule of an authoritarian father to a self-governing adulthood, with the state of innocence a happily lost state of powerlessness. But here innocence is presented as a sweetly prelapsarian world of wonder. The children gambol in the forest, chase butterflies and skinny-dip in the moonlight (they also kill a hummingbird – a protected species – which precipitates their fall).

Their childishness binds them together in this natural milieu – a little family of their own, with the slightly older Kaiser taking the lead. Only at the Holmes' homestead, or in Kaiser and Jaillin's village, do their cultural differences become apparent. Then they must return to the roles that divide them, as when Jaillin sadly and angrily realises that Alan's disgust at the cock fight could also be disgust with her culture. Through the children – impressively played by a trio of gifted newcomers – wider historical change is refracted. But it is also simplified, for the film only hints at the more complicated issues, such as the differing interests of the Hindi East Indian community and the black Caribbeans. But then, while the opening scenes of the film imply that the story belongs to all three children, young 'master Alan' swiftly emerges as its main protagonist.

It is around Alan's household that much of the film is centred, with Jaillin and Kaiser established as the outsiders – who can only peek in at the birthday party through slatted blinds. It is at home that the contradictory feelings of the English are teased out: the liberal father, who is a 'native' to the island and wants the best for it; the 'little Englander' mother who dreads change. Along with the arch-colonialist Ross, these roles remain schematic, without the vibrant inner life of the children that makes the fragile *Hummingbird Tree* sing.

Lizzie Francke



Not a ticket to paradise: Desha Penco, Tom Beasley

TV FILM

Losing Track

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Jim Lee

Distributor

BBC TV

Production Company

BBC Wales

In association with Julian Seddon Pictures, The Orlando Film Company

Producers

Simon Crocker
Ruth Caleb

Production Associate

Dawn Walters

Location Manager

Lisa Gravelle

Casting

Anne Hopkinson
Kathleen Mackie

Assistant Directors

John Waldron
Lowri Thomas

Screenplay

Roger Eldridge

Director of Photography

Ashley Rowe

In colour

Camera Operator

2nd Unit:

Alan Hayward

Steadicam Operators

John Ward
Nigel Kirton

Visual Effects

Mat Irvine

Graphic Design

Sophie Mutton

Editor

Tom Kruydenberg

Production Designer

Steve Talbot

Music

Michael Storey

Costume Design

Jacki Winfield

Make-up Design

Marianne Grigg

Sound Editor

Muckel Price

Sound Recordist

Richard Dyer

Sound Re-recordist

Tim Ricketts

Cast

Alan Bates

Henry Sitchell

Geraldine James

Mrs Dewey

Ben Holden

Clive Sitchell

Michael Culver

Mr Gervaise

Sue Roderick

Ruby

James Copnall

Sidney "Rancid"

Renton

Brimley Jenkins

Shopkeeper

Lynette Edwards

Kirsten Jones

Actresses in Play

Caroline Stubbs

Women's Institute Lady

Jack Walters

Taxi Driver

Judith Humphreys

Miss Nelson

Giles Thomas

Actor in Play

7,305 feet

(at 25 fps) 75 minutes

● 1950. Henry Sitchell returns to Britain for the funeral of his wife Mary after five years as a District Officer in India. His clumsy attempts to restore a relationship with his twelve-year-old son Clive only emphasise the differences between them. Clive is quiet and sensitive, a dreamer; Henry is punctilious, abrupt, a gentleman of the old school. When Clive returns to boarding-school, Henry sets about preparing a treat for his son. Although the sympathetic housekeeper Mrs. Dewey strongly advises against it, he disposes of all Mary's things and sets about transforming her bedroom into a huge railway set, scrupulously modelled on the Darjeeling-Himalayan run.

Clive hides his distress at this sacrilege, but over the summer holidays his interest in the railway soon wanes. Henry, however, becomes more and more obsessed by it, even donning a signalman's waistcoat and cap, and the working-class accent to go with it. Mrs Dewey does her best to soften Henry's harsh régime for the boy, but relations between father and son become increasingly strained. When Henry is summoned to London and told that he need not return to India, he is appalled – there is still so much for him to do there. Humiliated as he tries to operate a traction engine at a local fair, Henry takes out his frustration on his son, hanging him dangerously over the edge of a railway bridge as a train thunders below.

Henry accepts a job outside the Civil Service as a majordomo for an Indian

prince. Mrs. Dewey implores him to stay for his boy's sake, but agrees to continue looking after him. Clive brings back his friend Sidney for his father's last weekend in the country. The three of them attend Mrs. Dewey's amateur dramatics where Henry sees her as a woman for the first time. He arranges a train race between the two boys, but Clive's defeat brings their differences to a head. Clive accuses his father of selfishness and lack of feeling. Henry destroys the train set and finds his son at a makeshift shrine for Mary. Seeing his father off at the station, Clive will not let go of his hand. A freeze-frame captures their reconciliation.

● At the recent "Odd Couple" conference on broadcasting and the arts, BBC2 controller Alan Yentob made an unconvincing defence of the corporation's reluctance to grant their own so-called 'films' a theatrical release, on the grounds that such exposure would lessen the sense of 'an event' about a one-off television transmission. While one suspects this rationale could only make sense to a BBC controller, and we must mourn the loss of, say, *The Grass Arena* to the cinema screen, the truth is that precious few of those plays made for Screens One or Two would tempt an audience away from the television set.

This sincere, presumably autobiographical tele-play certainly resides quite comfortably in the Screen One season, and by all appearances the film-makers would not have it any other way. An archetypal father-son drama in which the artist-as-a-sensitive-and-misunderstood-twelve-year-old works out his relationship with his insensitive-and-misunderstood dad, *Losing Track* couches its uneventful tale in a cosily nostalgic prop-department world of vintage cars, steam trains, cloth caps and knee-length short trousers, complemented with romantic forays through our green and pleasant land.

Virtually a three-hander, Roger Eldridge's screenplay is much better on the boy, Clive, than Alan Bates' crusty civil servant stereotype, and provides Geraldine James as the housekeeper Mrs Dewey with no interior life at all. The lad's mock newspaper, *Clive's Chronicles*, with its sensationally acerbic headlines ("Despot Opens Maryland Railway"), is a sharp, witty path into his imagination. But Henry's repressed and repressive character is taken too far – he cannot abide to see his son eat dollymixtures – and his near-pathological obsession with railways is an over-worked and prescriptive device ("This is our world", he proclaims over the model railway, "it just needs us to control it. This is the proper dream for boys, not scrawling on scraps of paper"). So thoroughly despicable does this barking martinet appear that it's hard not to be appalled by the play's sentimental rapprochement, boy and man reconciled at last, and nice, widowed Mrs. Dewey waiting in the wings.

Tom Charity

Trust Me

United Kingdom 1992

Director: Tony Dow

Distributor

BBCTV

Production Company

BBC Films

For Screen One

Executive Producer

Richard Broke

Producer

Peter Goodchild

Production Associate

Alison Gilby

Daphne Spink

Production Manager

Susannah Maclean

Casting Adviser

Anne Hopkinson

Assistant Directors

Mary Soan

Jamie Annett

Beni Turkson

Screenplay

Tony Sarchet

Director of Photography

John Rhodes

In colour

Visual Effects Designer

Andy Lazell

Editor

John Jarvis

Production Designer

Donal Woods

Music

Clever Music

Costume Design

Robin Stubbs

Make-up Design

Lisa Westcott

Sound Editor

Simon Price

Sound Recordist

Roger Long

Sound Re-recordist

Aad Wirtz

Production Assistant

Pauline Bullock-

Webster

Stunt Co-ordinator

Gareth Milne

Cast

Alfred Molina

Harry Greaves

Jill Gascoine

Vivien Empson

Hywel Bennett

Ralph

Jack Shepherd

Kevin Blake

Roger Lloyd Pack

Gordon

Harry Towb

George Empson

Edna Dore

Rose

Peter Wingfield

Paul

Alphonsia Emmanuel

Col

Derek Benfield

Man on Bus

Ian Targett

David

Alan Palmer

Party Guest

Carol Starks

Catherine

Christopher Scoular

Brian

Conleth Hill

Neil

Simon Cotton

Climax

Strippers

Michael Grady

Duggan

David Simeon

Rambler

Charlie Creed-Miles

Danny

Paula-Ann Bland

Prostitute

Francesca Ryan

Policewoman

Yvonne O'Grady

Woman Customer

Gabe Cronnelly

Walther

David Cronnelly

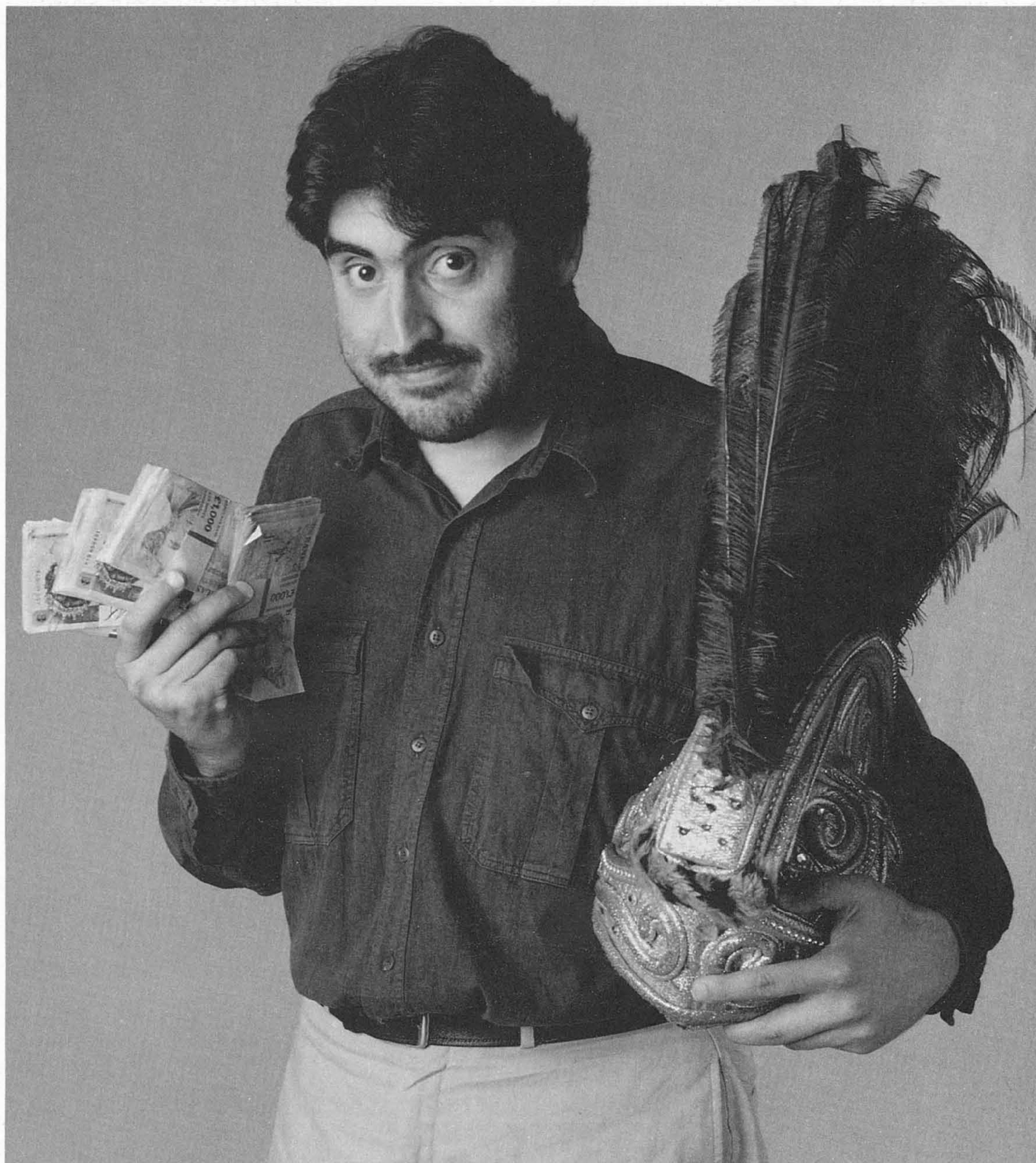
Uli

Vincent Keane

Geoff

7,500 feet

(at 25 fps) 80 minutes



True to a twisted logic: Alfred Molina

Harry Greaves works as a barman but puts most of his energies into planting hoaxes and spinning tall stories to tabloid journalists, to the despair of his girlfriend Col. At a costume party, Harry baits his businessman brother Paul with his knowledge of a secret defence project. The next day, Harry tries to sell his bogus memoirs, *Confessions of a Hit Man*, to publisher George Empson. Empson declines the book, but hires him to murder Vivien, his two-timing wife. To save his skin, Harry tells Vivien her husband is involved in perverted sexual practises with his own (imaginary) wife, and urges her to leave the country.

Shortly afterwards, Empson is found drowned in the River Severn, victim of the brutal Ralph and his sidekick Gordon – hit-men hired by Vivien, who disbelieved Harry's story but knows about her husband's real affaire. Still masquerading as a contract killer, Harry joins Ralph in raiding Empson's office, to retrieve his incriminating memoirs. Prompted by Harry's supposed knowledge of the

defence project, Paul has called in Kevin Blake, his slow-witted security officer, to investigate the leak. Hoping to persuade him to discount Paul's request, Harry responds by spinning Blake a phoney story about Paul's marital problems.

Misunderstanding, Blake tries to ingratiate himself with Catherine, which she takes as a hint that Paul and he are lovers. After this revelation, Paul's marital problems immediately become a reality. To cover their tracks over George Empson's murder, Ralph and Gordon plan to kill Vivien, and call on Harry to arrange tactics. Harry's true status is almost revealed when they spot newspaper cuttings about his confidence tricks, but Harry bamboozles them with more quick talking.

Harry promises to heal the rift between Paul and Catherine if Paul will give him the defence project's secret weapon (which he needs to renew his credentials with Ralph). Blake, convinced that Paul is a security risk, follows him to his rendezvous, where he hands over the weapon – a self-heating soupcan for battlefield use.

After neutralising Blake, Harry escapes with the can, only to find that Ralph plans to eliminate both Col and himself at Vivien's suburban house. Thrown into a fishtank, the can causes an electrical storm. Gordon is electrocuted, while Ralph is asphyxiated by the spray from a fire extinguisher. As the house explodes behind him, Harry tells Col he is finally giving up lying.

Last encountered in the BBC's previous "Screen One" season as a cardboard cut-out Tony Hancock, Alfred Molina now bounces back as the fictional Harry Greaves – a congenital liar who hooks tabloid journalists, friends and passers-by with tales of orgies on Mount Everest, poisonous snakes that smell like lager, haunted trousers, and a fun-raising scheme to cross the Atlantic in a Portakabin. Whenever Tony Sarchet's script stays focused on this felicitous character and the hoodwinked victims around him, *Trust Me* proves a refreshing delight.

When the script develops into conventional farce, holes start to show.

Director Tony Dow, a practised hand with television comedy (*Only Fools and Horses*, *Birds of a Feather*), services the dialogue well. But larger action scenes, like the eruption into Harry's flat of an aggrieved tabloid journalist and his corps of heavies, lack precise rhythm. Sarchet intensifies the sense of confusion by casting even farce's twisted logic to the winds. The activities of Jack Shepherd's security officer, who inadvertently involves himself in a homosexual relationship with Molina's brother, are particularly baffling; and by the time the plot's self-heating soup-can makes its appearance, the film has capsized into silliness.

But there is plenty of good character comedy to savour along the way, from Molina's quick-talking prankster and Jill Gascoine's ice-cold cookie Vivien, to the rasping hitman of Hywel Bennett, his pretty-boy roles long behind him. British Telecom should be pleased too: there are so many shots of Molina phoning from their logo-decorated call boxes that the film almost seems like an 80-minute commercial.

Geoff Brown

TOP 25

Mark Kermode reviews this month's rental/rental premiere releases and William Green new retail/retail premiere videos

★ Highlights
Reviews in Monthly Film Bulletin (MFB) and Sight and Sound are cited in parentheses
Rental
Children of the Corn
High Fliers HFV 8002
USA 1984
<i>Certificate 18</i> <i>Director</i> Fritz Kiersch Dreary and turgid horror yarn loosely adapted from a Stephen King short story. Reissued with <i>Children of the Corn II</i> (see below). (MFB No. 607)
Christopher Columbus: The Discovery
Braveworld CCV 10001
USA 1992
<i>Certificate PG</i> <i>Director</i> John Glen Dreadful multi-million-dollar fiasco, featuring an ill-chosen cast – George Corraface (bland), Rachel Ward (wooden) and Tom Selleck (hilarious). Torquemada is played by a bumbling Marlon Brando, who took the cheque then disowned the project (as did scriptwriter Mario Puzo). (S&S October 1992)
Fried Green Tomatoes at the Whistle Stop Café
Columbia TriStar CVT 18588
USA 1991
<i>Certificate 15</i> <i>Director</i> Jon Avnet Whimsical comedy adapted from Fannie Flagg's novel. A bored middle-aged housewife (Kathy Bates) finds refuge in the childhood reminiscences of a sprightly octogenarian (Jessica Tandy). (S&S March 1992)
Jersey Girl
EV EVV 1224
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 15</i> <i>Director</i> David Burton Morris Lively romantic comedy, gleaning much of its charm from lead star Jami Gertz. A fiery New Jersey girl sets her sights on an upmarket Manhattan man (Dylan McDermott). Less spicy than Morris' <i>Patti Rocks</i> , but fun nonetheless. (S&S September 1992)
Noises Off
Buena Vista D31592
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 15</i> <i>Director</i> Peter Bogdanovich Finely orchestrated but irritating adaptation of Michael Frayn's hit stage play. A team of talentless actors rehearse for a Broadway run, with the backstage antics outdoing those in front of the curtains. Grating. (S&S August 1992)
The Playboys
FoxVideo 5791
United Kingdom 1992
<i>Certificate 15</i> <i>Director</i> Gillies MacKinnon ★ Moving tale of life in Eire in the late 50s. A troupe of players arrive in a village where a woman is being persecuted for not revealing the identity of her baby's father. Strong performances from the cast (Albert Finney, Aidan Quinn) and beautifully controlled direction. (S&S June 1992)
The Player
Guild 8690
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 15</i> <i>Director</i> Robert Altman ★ Enjoyable adaptation of Michael Tolkin's novel set amidst the grimy

corruption of Hollywood. A paranoid studio exec (Tim Robbins) accidentally murders a struggling writer. Intrigue and double-dealing follow. Altman handles the star-studded cast brilliantly. A gem. (S&S July 1992)
Star Trek VI: The Undiscovered Country
CIC Video VBH 2558
USA 1991
<i>Certificate PG</i> <i>Director</i> Nicholas Meyer ★ Wonderful final chapter in the patchy <i>Trek</i> movie series, with the impending collapse of the Klingon military empire providing a metaphor for the end of our cold war. William Shatner is great as the gung-ho Kirk who cannot accept the Klingons as allies, while Spock (Leonard Nimoy) argues forcefully for a peace. Contains two minutes of additional footage. (S&S March 1992)
Stone Cold
20.20 Vision NVT 12861
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 18</i> <i>Director</i> Craig R. Baxley ★ Terrific exploitation movie, nimbly directed by Baxley, who manages to work around Brian Bosworth's lack of thespian talent. An undercover cop infiltrates a biker gang attempting to spring one of its clan from prison. Lance Henriksen is great as the fiendish gang leader. (S&S September 1992)
Stop! or My Mom Will Shoot
CIC Video VHA 1590
USA 1992
<i>Certificate PG</i> <i>Director</i> Roger Spottiswoode Dismal comedy caper. An LA cop (Sylvester Stallone) is plagued by his overbearing mom (Estelle Getty) who becomes a witness to a murder and ends up helping him crack the case. (S&S June 1992)
Universal Soldier
Guild 8693
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 18</i> <i>Director</i> Roland Emmerich ★ Efficient sci-fi action movie, entertaining despite its plagiarism of <i>Robocop</i> . Two Vietnam vets (Dolph Lundgren, Jean-Claude Van Damme), revived from death by a special drug, are programmed to fight in an elite army. Haunted by flashbacks from their past lives, the rivals go AWOL and wreak havoc. (S&S September 1992)

I Spy: Van Damme in 'Universal Soldier'

Rental premiere
All American Murder
First Independent
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 18</i> <i>Director</i> Anson Williams <i>Producer</i> Bill Novodor <i>Screenplay</i> Barry Sandler <i>Lead Actors</i> Christopher Walken, Charlie Schlatter, Josie Bissett, Amy Davis <i>90 minutes</i> ★ Gripping <i>Twin Peaks</i> derivative with a fine nasty performance from Christopher Walken and an engrossing script. A young tearaway (Schlatter) sets out to clear his name after being accused of murdering a high-school beauty queen and unearths tawdry secrets in the process. Racy thrills.
Ambition
Columbia TriStar CVT 18587
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 15</i> <i>Director</i> Scott D. Goldstein <i>Producer</i> Richard E. Johnson <i>Screenplay</i> Lou Diamond Philips <i>Lead Actors</i> Lou Diamond Philips, Clancy Brown, Cecilia Peck, Richard Bradford, William Pugh <i>95 minutes</i> A bookshop owner and aspiring crime writer (Philips) employs a paroled murderer in order to garner material for his art. But who is the more dangerous of the two? Philips' screenwriting debut, although far from original, is a pleasantly engaging thriller and his performance is enthusiastic.
The Art of Dying
VPD AMP 110
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 18</i> <i>Director</i> Wings Hauser <i>Producers</i> Richard Pepin, Joseph Merhi <i>Screenplay</i> Joseph Merhi <i>Lead Actors</i> Wings Hauser, Kathleen Kinmont, Gary Werntz, Mitch Hara <i>93 minutes</i> ★ Structurally sloppy but entertaining sleaze-fest. A hard-nosed cop with a mission to clean up the streets of vice tracks down a snuff film-maker who restages murder scenes from famous movies. Kinmont is great as Hauser's fetishistic partner. As well as directing and acting, Hauser even performs some of the jazzy musical score.
Blue Tornado
20.20 Vision NVT 18656
USA 1992
<i>Certificate 15</i> <i>Director</i> Tony B. Bobb <i>Producer</i> Giovanni Di Clemente <i>Screenplay</i> Gino Caponne, Tony B. Bobb <i>Lead Actors</i> Patsy Kensit, Dirk Benedict, Ted McGinley, David Warner <i>90 minutes</i> Enjoyable, silly sci-fi action hybrid, featuring yet another unconvincing performance by Patsy Kensit. Jet ace Alex encounters a top-level cover-up when one of his squadron is abducted by aliens. Kensit helps him beat the system and commune with the extraterrestrials.
Brain Donors
CIC Video VHB 2632
USA 1992
<i>Certificate PG</i> <i>Director</i> Dennis Dugan <i>Producers</i> Gil Netter, James D. Brubaker <i>Screenplay</i> Pat Proft <i>Lead Actors</i> John Turturro, Bob Nelson, Mel Smith <i>76 minutes</i> Ill-advised Marx Brothers rip-off, bearing none of the comic class which one would

expect from executive producers Jerry and David Zucker, scriptwriter Proft or the talented cast. A rich widow hires a corrupt lawyer to help her set up a ballet company with the aid of two incompetent assistants.

Children of the Corn II: The Final Sacrifice
High Fliers HFV 8218
USA 1992

Certificate 18 *Director* David F. Price
Producers Scott A. Stone, David G. Stanley
Screenplay A. L. Katz, Gilbert Adler
Lead Actors Terence Knox, Paul Scherrer, Ryan Bollman, Christie Clark, Rosalind Allen, Ned Romero *89 minutes*
★ Superior sequel, outshining the original in wit, inventiveness, suspense and gore. Parent-murdering children of a Nebraska town team up with the youth of a neighbouring town for a second round of massacres. Price orchestrates the horror set-pieces with aplomb, particularly a wonderful ‘death by nosebleed’ sequence. Sleazy fun.

Christmas in Connecticut
First Independent VA 20173
USA 1992

Certificate U
Director Arnold Schwarzenegger
Producer Cyrus Yavneh *Screenplay* Janet Brownell, based on a screenplay by Lionel Houser, Adele Comandini, from a story by Aileen Hamilton *Lead Actors* Dyan Cannon, Kris Kristofferson, Richard Roundtree, Tony Curtis *93 minutes*
Wholesome family entertainment in the form of a TV special directed by ‘Big Arnie’. A seemingly homely TV star (Cannon) is enlisted to star in a Christmas special with a national hero (Kristofferson). Japes ensue.

The Erotic Adventures of the Three Musketeers
Rio MSG 206
USA 1992

Certificate 18 *Director* Norman Apstein
Producers Britt Paris, David B. Kravis
Screenplay Catherine Tavel
Lead Actors Scott Gallegos, Dean Alba, Marc Goldberg, Tracy Winn, Britt Morgan *89 minutes*
Unfunny soft-core romp, clearly cut down from a hard-core original. A young woman joins the illustrious, lecherous musketeers as they attempt to save the Queen of France from an evil cardinal. Apstein’s clumsy film fails on all accounts. Miserable.

House Party 2: The Pyjama Jam
First Independent VA 20175
USA 1992

Certificate 15 *Directors* Doug McHenry, George Jackson *Producer* Doug McHenry
Screenplay Rusty Cundieff, Daryl G. Nickens *Lead Actors* Christopher Reid, Christopher Martin. Tisha Campbell, Iman, Queen Latifa, Whoopi Goldberg *91 minutes*
Further adolescent antics played out against a thumping rap soundtrack. A wide-boy (Martin) loses his pal’s college fees to a devious record mogul (Iman) so the boys have to swindle the money back.

Live Wire
EV EVV 1234
USA 1992

Certificate 15 *Director* Christian Duguay
Producers Suzanne Todd, David Willis
Screenplay Bart Baker *Lead Actors*

Pierce Brosnan, Ron Silver, Ben Cross, Lisa Eilbacher, Brent Jennings *81 minutes*
★ Inventive, trashy thriller with sci-fi overtones. Evil fiend Rashid (Cross) invents a chemical which resembles water but which explodes when drunk. FBI bomb expert (Brosnan) is put on the case. Duguay keeps the pace tight, injecting a genuine sense of urgency and suspense.

Night Rhythms
Columbia TriStar NVT 18746
USA 1992

Certificate 18 *Director* A. Gregory Hippolyte
Producer Andrew Garroni
Screenplay Alan Gries, Robert Sullivent
Lead Actors Martin Hewitt, Sam Jones, Deborah Driggs, Delia Sheppard *98 minutes*

A new high (or perhaps low) for Hippolyte, featuring more designer shagging than any of his previous ‘erotic thrillers’. A hunky DJ (Hewitt) talks dirty to women callers until he is framed for murder. Delia Sheppard plays the not very mysterious lesbian with a secret.

Revenge of the Nerds III: The Next Generation
FoxVideo Movie Premiere 1960
USA 1992

Certificate PG *Director* Roland Mesa
Executive Producers Steve Zacharias, Jeff Buhai *Screenplay* Steve Zacharias, Jeff Buhai *Lead Actors* Gregg Binkley, Richard Israel, Morton Downey Jnr *92 minutes*
A sad indication of the rapid decline of Fox’s recently launched elite ‘Movie Premiere’ label. Ex-nerd student turned yuppie (Lewis) is re-recruited as head geek by a new generation of misfits.

Three Little Ninjas and the Lost Treasure
20.20 Vison NVT 18745
USA 1992

Certificate PG *Director* Emmett Alston
Producer/Screenplay Douglas Ivan
Lead Actors Douglas Ivan, Steve Nelson, Jonathan Anzaldo, Alan Godshaw *88 minutes*
High-kicking kids’ action-comedy. Three friends on holiday follow a trail in search of lost treasure.

Triumph of the Heart
Odyssey ODY 332
USA 1991

Certificate U *Director* Richard Michaels
Producers David Permut, Daniel Levy
Screenplay Jeff Andrus *Lead Actors* Mario Van Peebles, Susan Ruttan, Lane Davis, Lynn Whitefield, Adam Faraizl *94 minutes*
Boringly uplifting true-life TV drama. A football hero coaches a physically handicapped young boy to compete in a race for disabled athletes.

Les Amants du Pont-Neuf
Artificial Eye ART 047
France 1991 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Leos Carax
Despite three years of painstaking construction, Carax’s *magnum opus* about a tramp and a blind girl is built on the shakiest of foundations. Banal and sentimental, although the verve of the director’s images is admirable. (S&S September 1992) *Subtitles Widescreen*



Coming to America: Vincent Spano, Joaquim De Almeida in ‘Good Morning Babylon’

Batman Returns
Warner PES 15000
USA 1992 Price £13.99

Certificate 15 *Director* Tim Burton
★ Another unstructured *Batman* adventure from director Burton, starring this time Penguin (Danny DeVito) and Catwoman (Michelle Pfeiffer). The darkly imaginative Gotham City visuals make up for the poor script. (S&S August 1992)

Bill & Ted’s Bogus Journey
Columbia TriStar CVR 23651
USA 1991 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 *Director* Peter Hewitt
Irrepressible air-heads Bill (Alex Winter) and Ted (Keanu Reeves) meet up with a very “cool dude” – William Sadler as the Grim Reaper – and trip around Heaven and Hell. Sometimes very funny. (S&S January 1992)

The Charge of the Light Brigade
Connoisseur CR 094
UK 1968 Price £14.99

Certificate PG *Director* Tony Richardson
★ Smart uniforms and a sparkling cast lend lustre to this damning portrait of military incompetence, regimental rivalry and pervasive snobbery during the ill-fated Crimean campaign of 1845. A fine monument to 60s British cinema. (MFB No. 414)

Good Morning Babylon (Good Morning Babilonia)
Artificial Eye ART 049
Italy/France/USA 1986 Price £15.99

Certificate 15
Directors Paolo Taviani/Vittorio Taviani
★ The birth and building of Hollywood, as symbolised by the labours of two Tuscan migrant workers who find work on the set of Griffith’s *Intolerance*. Vincent Spano and Joaquim De Almeida play the stonemason brothers. (MFB No. 643) *Some Subtitles*

Jesus of Montreal (Jésus de Montréal)
Artificial Eye ART 048
Canada/France 1989 Price £15.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Denys Arcand
In a worthy follow-up to his black comedy *The Decline of the American Empire*, Arcand directs a tale about a group of actor-radicals commissioned to put on a passion play. Starring Lothaire Bluteau. (MFB No. 672) *Subtitles*

The Pit and the Pendulum
EV EVS 1073
USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Stuart Gordon
Gory melange of several Edgar Allan Poe

tales, with Lance Henriksen as the evil Torquemada and a lugubrious Oliver Reed. (S&S December 1991, Rental Premiere)

Wedlock
EV EVS 1074
USA 1990 Price £10.99

Certificate 18 *Director* Lewis Teague
Inventive second-string thriller with Rutger Hauer and Mimi Rogers as two escaped convicts bound together by a pair of tag collars set to explode if they stray too far apart. (S&S December 1991, Rental Premiere)

Year of the Gun
First Independent VA 30274
USA 1991 Price £10.99

Certificate 15 *Director* John Frankenheimer
Muddy thriller about a couple of American reporters in Italy caught up in the Red Brigade kidnap of Aldo Moro in 1978. Andrew McCarthy and Sharon Stone do a lot of running but get nowhere fast. (S&S February 1992)

Back to the Future Box-set:
Back to the Future/
Back to the Future Part II/
Back to the Future Part III
CIC Video VHR 1560
USA 1985/1989/1990 Price £26.99

Certificate PG *Director* Robert Zemeckis
Reluctant hero Michael J. Fox travels through time in an attempt to save himself and his small-town family. Space-time concepts of Einsteinian complexity are smoothly invoked as he rushes back to the 50s (*Part 1*), forward to 2015 (*Part II*) and finally in full reverse to the old Wild West (*Part III*). (MFB Nos. 623/672/678) *Widescreen*

Indiana Jones Box-set:
The Raiders of the Lost Ark/
Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom/
Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade
CIC Video VHR 2616
USA 1981/1984/1989 Price £29.99

Certificate PG *Director* Steven Spielberg
Harrison Ford muscles his way through a brilliantly inventive series of ‘boy’s own’ adventures. *The Raiders of the Lost Ark* remains the finest episode, but after a perilous escape from sentimentality (*The Temple of Doom*), our hero bows out with style (with Sean Connery) in *The Last Crusade*. (MFB Nos. 572/606/666)

Survivor

Mark Kermode reviews the feature film laser discs that are currently available in Britain

This is the first instalment in what the magazine hopes will become a regular laser disc review section. All the titles are recorded in PAL and are compatible with all British laser disc players – import titles recorded in NTSC (which will occasionally be covered) can only be played on multi-standard players. The figures CLV or CAV denote the different densities of information put on to a disc. CLV discs have extended playing time and offer Chapter search, scan and pause facilities. CAV discs are shorter, but lend themselves to intense scrutiny and examination, offering freeze-frame, slow motion, high-speed search and random access capabilities. CAV discs can also hold additional information tracks (such as director commentary and subtitling) which remain ‘hidden’ unless activated by the viewer. Special attention is also paid in this section to the aspect ratio of the picture contained on the disc. The phrase ‘Full Screen’ refers to an image which fills the entire TV screen but which has been artificially cropped at the sides of the picture. ‘Academy’ denotes a full-frame picture which was originally shot in the 1.33:1 ratio, the dimensions of a TV screen; these pictures have not been cropped. The term ‘Widescreen’ can refer to a variety of picture dimensions, all of which appear on a TV screen with black bands above and below the picture (a ‘letterbox’). The exact ratio of the image of each disc is indicated numerically: 1.66:1, 1.75:1, 1.85:1, or 2.35:1, the last of these being the ratio of ‘Cinemascope’ or ‘Panavision’.

The Addams Family

Columbia TriStar LD 12810
PAL CLV Full Screen 1.33:1 Dolby stereo
21 Chapters
USA 1991 Price £24.99
Certificate PG Director Barry Sonnenfeld 96 minutes
Visually impressive but structurally unsound adaptation which owes more to the TV series than to the original cartoon strip. Anjelica Huston is great as Morticia while Raul Julia is fittingly morbid as Gomez. (S&S January 1992)

Air America

Pioneer PLFEB 30211
PAL CLV Full Screen 1.33:1
Dolby surround
15 Chapters
USA 1990 Price £24.99
Certificate 15 Director Roger Spottiswoode 107 minutes
Dopey, gung-ho action adventure boosted by a rock soundtrack and breathtaking stunts. Two aviators (Mel Gibson, Robert Downey Jnr.) ship ‘supplies’ out of Laos in 1969 as part of an undercover military operation. Drug dealing and double crossing abound. (MFB No. 684)

Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore

Tartan TVL 004
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1 Stereo
15 Chapters
USA 1974 Price £29.95
Certificate 15 Director Martin Scorsese 108 minutes
★ A recently widowed woman (Ellen Burstyn) heads out across the southwest with her young son in search of a new life. Burstyn’s Oscar-winning performance is wonderful and Scorsese’s understated direction reveals a blossoming talent. (MFB No. 497)



Surviving: Ellen Burstyn in ‘Alice Doesn’t Live Here Anymore’

Angel Heart

Pioneer PLFEB 30151
PAL CLV Full Screen 1.33:1
Stereo surround
24 Chapters
USA 1987 Price £24.99
Certificate 18 Director Alan Parker 108 minutes
Parker’s adaptation of William Hjortsberg’s novel suffers occasionally from visual flashiness, but Mickey Rourke’s down-at-heel gumshoe performance saves the proceedings. A detective, hired to find a missing crooner, finds himself chasing his own demonic tail. Chilling. (MFB No. 645)

Awakenings

Columbia TriStar LD 12460
PAL CLV Full Screen 1.33:1 Dolby stereo
23 Chapters
USA 1990 Price £24.99
Certificate 15 Director Penny Marshall 116 minutes
Gushingly sentimental account of Dr Oliver Sach’s fleeting success treating narcolepsy. Strong performances by Robin Williams and Robert De Niro, as doctor and patient respectively, cannot overcome the boredom. (MFB No. 686)

A.W.O.L.: Absent Without Leave

Pioneer PLFEB 30241
PAL Full Screen 1.33:1 Dolby surround
16 Chapters
USA 1990 Price £24.99
Certificate 18 Director Sheldon Lettich 104 minutes
Jean-Claude Van Damme plays a French legionnaire trying to reach his ailing brother’s bedside in this fiesty action movie. The direction is somewhat plodding and the plot is risible, but the action sequences are plentiful and rewarding. (MFB No. 681)

Big Wednesday

Tartan TVL 009
PAL CVL Widescreen 2.35:1 Dolby stereo
24 Chapters
USA 1978 Price £29.95
Certificate PG Director John Milius 115 minutes
★ Exemplary teenage angst movie, one of Milius’ best works. Three teenagers (Jan-Michael Vincent, William Katt, Gary Busey) surf their way through the 60s, while age, war and social responsibility gradually erode their childhood freedoms. Moody and macho, this looks superb in its original Panavision aspect ratio. (MFB No. 544)

Bill & Ted’s Bogus Journey

Columbia TriStar LD 13651
PAL CLV Full Screen 1.33:1 Dolby stereo
11 Chapters
USA 1991 Price £24.99
Certificate PG Director Peter Hewitt 90 minutes
★ A worthy sequel to *Bill & Ted’s Excellent Adventure*. Our eponymous heroes (Alex Winter, Keanu Reeves) do battle with death, evil robot duplicates and fiendish futuristic gym teachers. Most “bodacious” and “totally non-heinous”. (S&S January 1992)

Bugsy

Columbia TriStar LD 13645
PAL CLV Widescreen (ratio unspecified)
Dolby stereo
38 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1991 Price £34.99
Certificate 18 Director Barry Levinson 131 minutes
A lavish interpretation of the life of gangster Bugsy Siegel, who founded Las Vegas and was later murdered by his partners. James Toback’s script sizzles with wit and energy but the whitewashing of Siegel’s character leaves an unpleasant after-taste. (S&S April 1992)

Close Encounters of the Third Kind:

The Special Edition

Columbia TriStar LD 10003
PAL CLV Widescreen (ratio unspecified)
Dolby surround
40 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1977/80 Price £34.99
Certificate PG Director Steven Spielberg 127 minutes
★ Originally released at 135 minutes, Spielberg’s extraterrestrial epic was reissued with an additional 17 minutes of finale footage, although extensive re-editing of the body of the film brought the running time down to 132 minutes. *The Special Edition* includes impressive footage showing Richard Dreyfuss’ entry into the alien ship. Since discs run faster than films, this is shorter, at 127 minutes. (MFB Nos. 531/561)

Dances with Wolves

Pioneer PLFED 30311
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1
Dolby surround
26 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1990/91 Price £39.99
Certificate 15 Director Kevin Costner 224 minutes
★ Costner’s 52 minute extension to his

Western crucially reinstates scenes which depict his Native-American cohorts as more than merely lovable and friendly. For example, the massacre of white hunters by the Sioux causes Dunbar (Costner) to question his allegiance to the Native Americans. An intriguing and compelling addition to the solid original. (MFB No. 685)

The Damned

Tartan TVL 011
PAL CLV Widescreen 1.85:1 Mono
25 Chapters (2 disc set)
Italy/West Germany 1969 Price £34.95
Certificate 18 Director Luchino Visconti
148 minutes
Overblown but effective portrayal of the rise of Nazism reflected in a German industrialist family of the 30s. Dirk Bogarde, Ingrid Sterling and Helmut Berger provide riveting performances, although the tone of the piece now seems somewhat dated. Accurately presented in its original aspect ratio. (MFB No. 436)

Finnian's Rainbow

Tartan TVL005
PAL CLV (Sides 1&2) CAV (Side 3)
Widescreen 2.35:1 Stereo
14 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1965 Price £34.95
Certificate U Director Francis Ford Coppola
142 minutes
★ Fred Astaire, Petula Clark and leprechaun Tommy Steele scamper through this delightful, tuneful concoction, an old-time studio musical from up-and-coming movie brat Coppola. (MFB No. 390)

The Fisher King

Columbia TriStar LD 12490
PAL CLV Full Screen 1.33:1 Dolby stereo
38 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1991 Price £34.99
Certificate 15 Director Terry Gilliam
127 minutes
A joyously accomplished movie, visually hampered by inappropriate Full Screen cropping. A washed-up New York radio DJ (Jeff Bridges) attempts to redeem his life by aiding a lovestruck lunatic (Robin Williams). Richard LaGravenese's wonderful script is transformed into celluloid magic at the hands of director Gilliam. (S&S November 1991)

Flatliners

Columbia TriStar LD 12461
PALCLVFull Screen 1.33:1 Dolby stereo
18 Chapters
USA 1990 Price £24.99
Certificate 15 Director Joel Schumacher
111 minutes
Preposterous brat-pack fantasy. A group of renegade medical students (Keifer Sutherland, Julia Roberts, Kevin Bacon) recklessly experiment with near death experiences. Sadly, they all safely return from the brink. (MFB No. 682)

Hook

Columbia TriStar LD 13187
PAL CLV Widescreen (ratio unspecified)
Dolby surround
38 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1991 Price £34.99
Certificate U Director Steven Spielberg
155 minutes
Lavish, ambitious but vacuous updating of the Peter Pan story which finds a grown-up (Robin Williams) rediscovering

his lost childhood. This two disc set includes a 'Making of Hook' featurette – the quality of which is diminished by transference from an NTSC master. (S&S April 1992)

Inside Daisy Clover

Tartan TVL 006
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1 Mono
15 Chapters
USA 1965 Price £29.95
Certificate 15 Director Robert Mulligan
128 minutes
A dark and disturbing portrait of the psychotic underside of the old Hollywood star system. Natalie Wood excels as the tomboy performer whose mental health disintegrates as she becomes famous. Christopher Plummer is seductively slimy as a studio mogul. (MFB No. 390)

Hearts of Darkness

Tartan TVL 007
PAL CLV Academy 1.33:1 Dolby stereo
19 Chapters
USA 1991 Price £29.95
Certificate 15 Directors Fax Bahr, George Hickenlooper
92 minutes
★ Subtitled *A Filmmaker's Apocalypse*, this searing documentary reveals the behind-the-scenes madness from which Coppola's *Apocalypse Now* was born. Marlon Brando improvises endlessly, Martin Sheen has a heart attack, Timothy Bottoms takes drugs and Coppola ploughs on regardless. A masterpiece. (S&S January 1992)

Honeysuckle Rose

Tartan TVL 101
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1 Dolby stereo
16 Chapters
USA 1980 Price £29.95
Certificate PG Director Jerry Schatzberg
119 minutes
Willie Nelson's screen debut pairs him with Dyan Cannon as a couple of touring Country and Western singers struggling to maintain their marriage. Inspired by *Intermezzo*, the movie boasts cameos by several other Country music stars (Emmylou Harris, Augie Meyers). (MFB No. 651)

L.A. Story

Pioneer PLFEB 30251
PAL CLV Widescreen 1.66:1
Dolby surround
12 Chapters
USA 1991 Price £24.99
Certificate 15 Director Mick Jackson
91 minutes
Sprightly romantic comedy set amidst the chaos of downtown LA. An eccentric television weatherman (Steve Martin) attempts to woo a sophisticated Englishwoman (Victoria Tennent) with a little help from a magical highway sign. Charming and full of chuckles. (S&S May 1991)

Lawrence of Arabia

Columbia TriStar LD 12058
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1 Dolby stereo
40 Chapters (2 disc set)
UK 1962 Price £34.99
Certificate PG Director David Lean
217 minutes
★ Originally premiered at 222 minutes, Lean's film was cut back to 202 minutes and then to 187. This director's cut features footage restored by Lean, who subsequently tightened the film to

217 minutes (See MFB No. 665). Presented in it's original Panavision ratio, retaining the majesty of Lean's vision in all its glory. (MFB No. 349)

The Left Handed Gun

Tartan TVL 013
PAL CLV Academy 1.33:1 Mono
16 Chapters
USA 1957 Price £29.95
Certificate PG Director Arthur Penn
99 minutes
Penn's debut feature is an impressive retelling of the legend of Billy the Kid. Incisively written by Gore Vidal and forcefully played by Paul Newman, the Kid is seen here as a divided soul unable to live up to his reputation as the most dangerous man in the West. (MFB No. 297)

McCabe and Mrs. Miller

Tartan TVL 003
PALCLV Widescreen 2.35:1 Mono
13 Chapters
USA 1971 Price £29.95
Certificate 15 Director Robert Altman
121 minutes
★ Classic Altman fare, this anti-heroic Western is set in a mining town and concerns the relationship between an idealistic gunslinger (Warren Beatty) and a worldly brothel madam (Julie Christie). Fine performances, poignantly offset by Leonard Cohen's music. (MFB No. 458)

My Girl

Columbia TriStar LD 13647
PAL CLV Full Screen (ratio unspecified)
Dolby stereo
28 Chapters
USA 1991 Price £24.99
Certificate PG Director Howard Zieff
98 minutes
Annoyingly sentimental story of the trials and tribulations of youth, inexplicably set in the early 70s. Dan Aykroyd and Jamie Lee Curtis provide welcome relief from the antics of cute kids Macaulay Culkin and Anna Chlumsky. (S&S February 1992)

Platoon

Columbia TriStar LD 11107
PAL CLV Widescreen (ratio unspecified)
Dolby stereo
15 Chapters
USA 1986 Price £24.99
Certificate 15 Director Oliver Stone
115 minutes
★ This searing depiction of the Vietnam war puts the audience right amidst a barrage of enemy fire and unpredictable deaths. Finely played by young guns Charlie Sheen, Willem Dafoe, and Tom Berenger, this slice of macho angst is vintage Stone. (MFB No. 639)

The Prince of Tides

Columbia TriStar LD 12840
PALCLV Widescreen (ratio unspecified)
Dolby stereo
26 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1991 Price £34.99
Certificate 15 Director Barbra Streisand
128 minutes
Self-indulgent adaptation of Pat Conroy's novel. A South Carolina football coach (Nick Nolte, superb) discusses his family's twisted history with a New York shrink (Streisand) in an attempt to unravel his sister's suicidal despair. Solid performances, slushy direction. (S&S March 1992)

The Return of the Living Dead

Tartan TVL 001
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1 Dolby stereo
11 Chapters
USA 1986 Price £29.95
Certificate 18 Director Dan O'Bannon
★ O'Bannon's spoof on George Romero's legendary *Night of the Living Dead* blends giggles and gore as the sinister dead-awakening gas once again wafts free in Louisville, infecting a gang of punks. (MFB No. 623)

The Silence of the Lambs

Columbia TriStar LD 12819
PAL CLV Full Screen (ratio unspecified)
Dolby stereo
18 Chapters
USA 1990 Price £24.99
Certificate 18 Director Jonathan Demme
114 minutes



Old ham: Anthony Hopkins

★ Demme's adaptation of Jonathan Harris' novel is just as terrifying when viewed in the safety of the home. Jodie Foster's Oscar-winning performance as an FBI rookie is a joy, although Anthony Hopkins is somewhat hammy as the psycho Hannibal Lecter. Top marks go to Howard Shore for the score. (S&S June 1991)

Terminator 2: Judgment Day

Pioneer PLFED 30341
PAL CLV (Sides 1,2 & 3) CAV (Side 4)
Widescreen 2.35:1 Dolby surround
78 Chapters (2 disc set)
USA 1991 Price £34.99
Certificate 18 Director James Cameron
164 minutes
★ Excellent example of the way laser discs should be presented; transferred in its original ratio, colour-timed by Cameron and with *all* the footage cut for the British theatrical and video releases restored, plus a great 'the making of' documentary (which contains additional CAV information and comprehensive Chapter segmentation). The indestructible Arnold Schwarzenegger returns – this time as the good guy. (S&S September 1991)

THX:1138

Tartan TVL 002
PAL CLV Widescreen 2.35:1
Dolby surround
8 Chapters
USA 1970 Price £29.95
Certificate 15 Director George Lucas
83 minutes
★ Seminal, experimental sci-fi movie originally made as a student short and subsequently expanded under Francis Ford Coppola's patronage. An outlaw from a futuristic society (Robert Duvall) is persecuted for rediscovering love and human affection. Walter Murch's multi-layered soundtrack is astonishing. (MFB No. 450)

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Letters are welcome, and should be addressed to the Editor at Sight and Sound, British Film Institute, 21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL
Facsimile 071 436 2327

Tom, Dick and who?

From B. Richter
I cannot believe you actually printed thirteen pages of lists of films in this issue of *Sight and Sound*! Aren't you worried about the overwhelming impression of train-spotting you give to your readers? I really couldn't care less which films Tom, Dick and Goran Gocic (who?) like! Apart from all that, keep up the good work.
Manchester

A matter of language

From Alan Pavelin
As always, your 'Top Ten Films' poll makes fascinating reading, especially with the critics/directors distinction.

As an alternative to having separate 'Top Tens' according to this 'horizontal' split, it is equally interesting to do a 'vertical' split according to country. It so happens that, for exactly half the respondents, the country (or one of the countries) given is the UK, US, Australia, Canada, or Eire, so that the data can be neatly re-evaluated according to (broadly) English-language respondents and others, with 115-odd in each category. This can give an indication of the extent to which English-speaking critics and directors, as opposed to the others, prefer English-language films. On my calculations the results are as follows:

English-language		
1	Citizen Kane	31
2	Vertigo	19
3	Raging Bull	18
4	La Règle du jeu	15
5	The Searchers	14
6	Tokyo Story	12
7	Seven Samurai	11
8	Pather Panchali	10
	2001: A Space Odyssey	10
10	8½	9
	The Godfather Part II	9
Others		
1	Citizen Kane	42
2	La Règle du jeu	24
3	L'Atalante	19
	The Passion of Joan of Arc	19
5	8½	17
	Tokyo Story	17
7	Battleship Potemkin	15
8	2001: A Space Odyssey	12
9	Andrei Rublev	11
	Rashomon	11

While about half the 'Top Ten' films chosen by critics and directors from English-language countries are American, only two of the other list are (interestingly, these two have more votes than on the first list). Overall, there is a clear difference between the two lists, which is at least as significant as that between critics and directors.

And so to the arguments about the canon, which Ian Christie's article will certainly stimulate. In recent years a new breed of 'populist' critic has emerged which regards as intolerable any attempt to suggest that a minority-interest film can be somehow 'better' than a popular one. These are the people who became agitated when reviewers in the quality press (a phrase they would reject as elitist) devoted more space to *The Long Day Closes* than to *Wayne's World* which opened in the same week, on the

grounds that the latter was far more popular (partly because it was shown in a great many more cinemas). It did not seem to occur to them that the youngsters who flocked to *Wayne's World* were hardly likely to be readers of the film reviews in the *Daily Telegraph* or whatever.

These populist critics even use words like 'repression' when a minority-interest film is hailed as better than a more commercially-oriented one (in truth, any given film is of minority interest). But whereas people who want to see *Wayne's World* or *Basic Instinct* are given every opportunity to do so (saturation coverage, early release on video, peaktime television screening after three years), those who want to see *L'Avventura* or *Ugetsu Monogatari* may have to wait many years for the opportunity, if ever. So who is being repressed?

Chislehurst, Kent

Ask the audience

From David Russell
Perhaps the next time *Sight and Sound* seeks to establish the ten best films of all time it will widen the terms of its research and include average filmgoers and not just critics and directors, whose views and judgments are probably the least enlightening.

The taste of critics has been corrupted by seeing too many films too often and usually in uncinematic contexts, while that of directors is frequently influenced by personal aspirations and stylistic preferences. I very much doubt, for instance, that if you polled your subscribers you would find *Vertigo* being preferred to *Psycho* or *North by Northwest* as the outstanding Hitchcock, or an emotionally sterile film like *Citizen Kane* being classed as the greatest film ever.

It is not surprising that despite the passing of four decades there is a remarkable continuity in the selections of the judges, because *Sight and Sound* is simply polling the same types of people - people for whom there is an established canon, the weight of which is difficult to ignore. But the cinema audience, of all audiences, is the least respectful of canons, and that is surely the true context for film appreciation.

The real value of polls such as these lies in what they tell us about filmgoers, since the only other guide available, box-office returns, is a highly superficial index. It would be revealing at the end of a decade to discover something about the sensibility of that generation of cinema audiences. As it is, the *Sight and Sound* poll simply confirms what everyone knows, namely that critics and directors inhabit a different planet from the rest of us.

Maidstone, Kent

Reviews or previews?

From Geoff Harris
All the reviews of television films in the last two issues of *Sight and Sound* are of films already screened. Given they contain a section on plot then a critique, shouldn't these be published in an issue before the film is broadcast? Isn't that the point of reviews?

Twickenham, Middlesex
● **Sight and Sound** would like to publish reviews of television films before their date of transmission, but at the moment television fails to provide us with tapes or screenings at a sufficiently early date. We are negotiating with them to see if satisfactory arrangements can be made.



Deliberate mistakes: how does Deckard gain our sympathy in 'Blade Runner'?

Deliberate mistakes

From Paul Chapman
It is pleasant to read at last a preview of the new cut of *Blade Runner* by someone who has clearly watched the film. Philip Strick is the first in my experience to reveal exactly the changes between the 1982 release and that now on offer; many critics seem to have preferred to trust Warner's press kit, among other myths, rather than their own senses and memories of the original. Strick is right up to a point to discount the precise genesis of the new version. I feel, however, that since it is being described as the 'director's cut', some examination must be made of what Ridley Scott's contribution was.

Listened to carefully, Bryant's description of four replicants at large ("Ridley's deliberate mistake") reveals itself to have been added to the soundtrack after the usual looping had been completed: M. Emmet Walsh's voice is pitched lower in a couple of off-screen lines in the scene, including this one. The mystery here is that having discovered the arithmetical error, the writers didn't simply add more O. S. dialogue to explain that two replicants were already accounted for, not one.

More telling is the interrogation of the snake-maker, Abdul Ben-Hassan. The scene was clearly shot to tell its story in pictures only: at one point Deckard shows the snake-scale-in-a-cellophane-bag in silhouette directly in front of a carefully placed light, a mark which it probably took Harrison Ford more than one take to hit.

Surely this dialogue was added post-sneaks, along with the narration? Even if not, they should have been removed in the 'restored' version. In fact, the 'director's cut' could have been assembled by an editor working from instructions jotted down during a twenty-second telephone call from Scott: "Lift the voiceover, cut the last scene, add the unicorn here".

The presence of accidental mistakes in this film is more damaging than it would be in a whodunnit. The deliberate mistakes include the half-second live-action tail of one shot of the (supposed) photograph of Rachael and her mother on a sun-dappled porch, and the changes to the lines of Leon's interrogation when Deckard listens to recordings later; for example, "My mother? Let me tell you about my mother" becomes "My mother? I'll tell you about my mother". These 'mistakes' are there by design, and are not supposed to be noticed. Scott put them there to suggest subliminally that the audience couldn't trust their own memories, and thus to gain sympathy for Rachael's plight, and Deckard's siding with her.

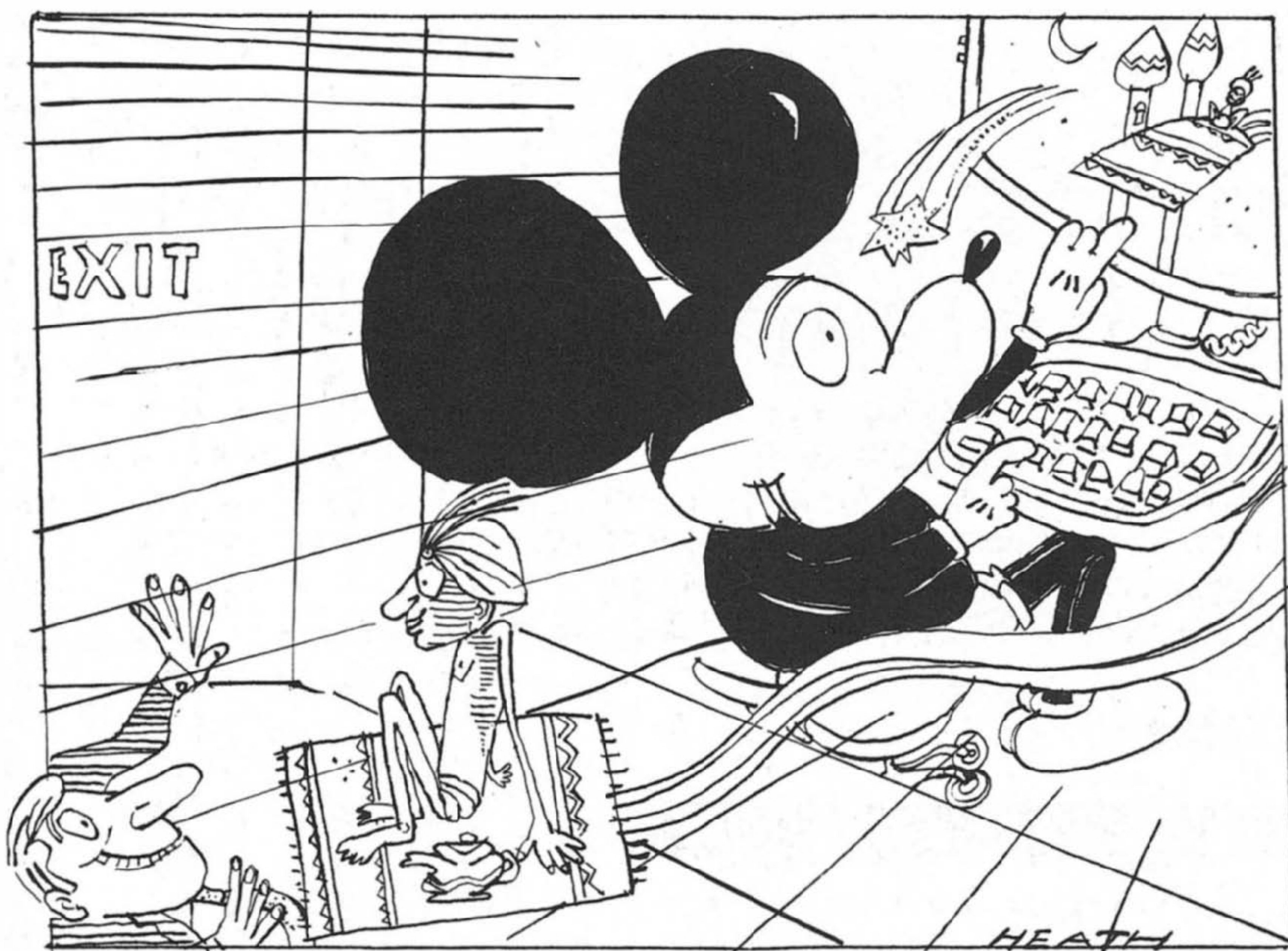
Time Out reported in 1982 that preview audiences for the pre-release cut had come out feeling "confused and disoriented". It seems Scott failed then to make the studio understand that this was what he wanted to do, better to tell the story. And now he has forgotten his own advice, and lent his name to a lazy reworking of a classic film.

London WC1

Correction

● **Feet of Song (S&S November 1992)**: The production company credit for this film should read: Malinka Films. For Channel Four. The film is available in 35mm. The director, Erica Russell, was born in New Zealand and moved to South Africa as a child.

Animating Disney



Benjamin Woolley

Disney seems to have rediscovered its soul. During the 80s, all the attention to theme parks and MOR live-action movies suggested that it might have been losing its inimitable touch as an animation studio. A string of mediocre feature-length cartoons apparently confirmed the diagnosis, and it seemed but a matter of time before all its creative energies would be devoted to inventing new theme-park rides and *Honey I Shrunk the Kids* sequels. Then came *Beauty and the Beast* and *Aladdin*.

There is no question that *Beauty and the Beast* showed that Disney is still capable of its old magic. The film really did animate; its characters were brought to life by the humour, imagination and unsurpassed technical skill that made *Snow White* and so many of its successors classics. And now *Aladdin*, too, is the talk of the Hollywood animation world, regarded as *Beauty's* equal, and in technical terms its superior.

What, then, has produced this return to form? What has inspired such a resurgence of interest in the animator's art? A technological answer may seem a potentially deterministic and dull one, but that is to ignore the relationship Disney has always had with the mechanics of animation. Disney has had a resourceful and innovative technical department since its earliest days, and

its developments have influenced the studio's style, and in turn cartoon culture, at all levels.

The department's most famous breakthrough was the invention of the 'multiplane' camera. This was used to create a sense of perspective in otherwise flat artwork by layering parts of the background scenery on top of each other according to their 'distance' from the foreground. So, there might be a mountain on the horizon, with some foothills in front of it and some trees in front of them, each moving at different speeds (the mountain hardly at all, the trees quickly) as the camera tracks past them.

The multiplane camera did not increase the realism of the animation, but nothing in animation is supposed to be realistic. Instead, it provided an abstract way of representing the sort of panoramic scenery – and panoramic themes – that the animators wanted to create. Constraints of time and cost make it necessary for animators to distinguish between a dynamic foreground, where the emphasis is on action and movement, and a static background, where the emphasis is on detail. The multiplane camera meant that the background could be moved to provide at least a suggestion of depth of field without having to draw a new background for each frame.

With *Aladdin*, Disney decided to include

'Disney has had a resourceful and innovative technical department since its earliest days, and its developments have influenced the studio's style, and in turn cartoon culture, at all levels'

two key scenes that made this compromise unsustainable. In one, *Aladdin* and his friend Abu fly through a cave on their magic carpet, pursued by a fiery flow of hot, spitting lava. To render this scene satisfactorily using conventional techniques would have required drawing each frame, foreground and background, in full detail, which would have been hugely time-consuming and expensive.

The solution was to use computer graphics, which had already been deployed with outstanding success in the ballroom scene of *Beauty and the Beast*. By creating a three-dimensional computer model of the cave through which *Aladdin* was to fly, the animators could leave the computer to produce detailed background drawings automatically from any chosen point of view. "I've built the equivalent of a live-action set", James Tooley, the Disney animator responsible for the scene told the American trade magazine *Computer Graphics World*. "There is complete freedom of camera angles and positions".

Another scene similarly benefits from the use of computers, for slightly different reasons. *Aladdin* features Disney's first computer-animated characters: the Magic Carpet and 'Tiger Head', a huge tiger's head made of sandstone that rises out of the desert and opens its jaws to reveal the entrance to the Cave of Wonders. The problem for the animators was that the Tiger Head crossed the divide between background and foreground. It was in the background because it was part of the desert, but was also foreground in the sense that it was a character as well. It therefore had to match the level of detail of the rest of the background, which meant that even the grains of sand that made up its surface, like the grains of sand in the surrounding desert, had to be visible. It would have been impossible to hand-animate movement while retaining such a level of detail, so a computer did the job instead.

Like the ballroom scene in *Beauty*, the cave sequence and the Tiger Head are likely to be among the most memorable in *Aladdin*. They are by no means the result of robotic processes, since it is still the animator, rather than the computer, who is ultimately responsible for bringing these scenes to life. Nevertheless, the irony of Disney's cartoon renaissance seems to be that it has rediscovered its soul in a machine.

PROFESSOR POTESKIN'S COMPETITION

The correct answers to our November competition were: 1. 'Dangerous When Wet'; 2. Highbury (Arsenal) stadium; 3. Ski-jumping; 4. Jacques Tati; 5. Horse doctor; 6. Kon Ichikawa; 7. Brixton; 8. Piaf, Cerdan; 9. A surfboard; 10. D. B. Sweeney, Ray Liotta. The outright winner was the cricket enthusiast Alan Campy of Rotherham, who remembered that the full name of the team in Question 7 was the 'Brixton Conquistadors XI'. The runners-up were Norman Pate of Redditch and Nigel Blunt of

Risca, Gwent. This month you can recover from the festive season's over-feasting with an indigestible quiz entitled 'Gluttony'. Three winners will each receive a package of videos that includes Maurizio Nichetti's 'The Icicle Thief' and 'Volere Volare' plus the wonderful 'Pete Kelly's Blues' with Ella Fitzgerald and Peggy Lee. All these titles are new releases from Tartan Video and are available to buy for £13.99 each (also available on laser disc at £29.95). Entries on a postcard by 15 January to Professor Poteskin, Sight and Sound,

21 Stephen Street, London W1P 1PL.

1. Which great film actor died in 1944 after crash-dieting to star as a maniac killer composer in Edwardian England?
2. To which remote region of Denmark does Babette bring the sophistication of a Parisian feast?
3. Mastroianni, Piccoli and Noiret met at a villa to eat themselves to death. Who was the fourth man at table?
4. In which film does Paul Newman indulge in an egg-swallowing marathon?

5. What is the staple food served in such vast quantities at Tampopo's restaurant, in the Japanese film of the same name?
6. Which French film of the 50s involved Jean Gabin and four suitcases full of pork?
7. What does the half-starved Charlie Chaplin eat for Thanksgiving in 'The Goldrush'?
8. In which Larry Cohen film is the world threatened by a junk-junk-food dessert?
9. Who or what gets overfed inside 'The Little Shop of Horrors'?
10. Who said, "Lunch is for wimps"?

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